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RM400C MEETS YZ400E

MOTOCROSS ACTION MAGAZINE

APRIL 1978
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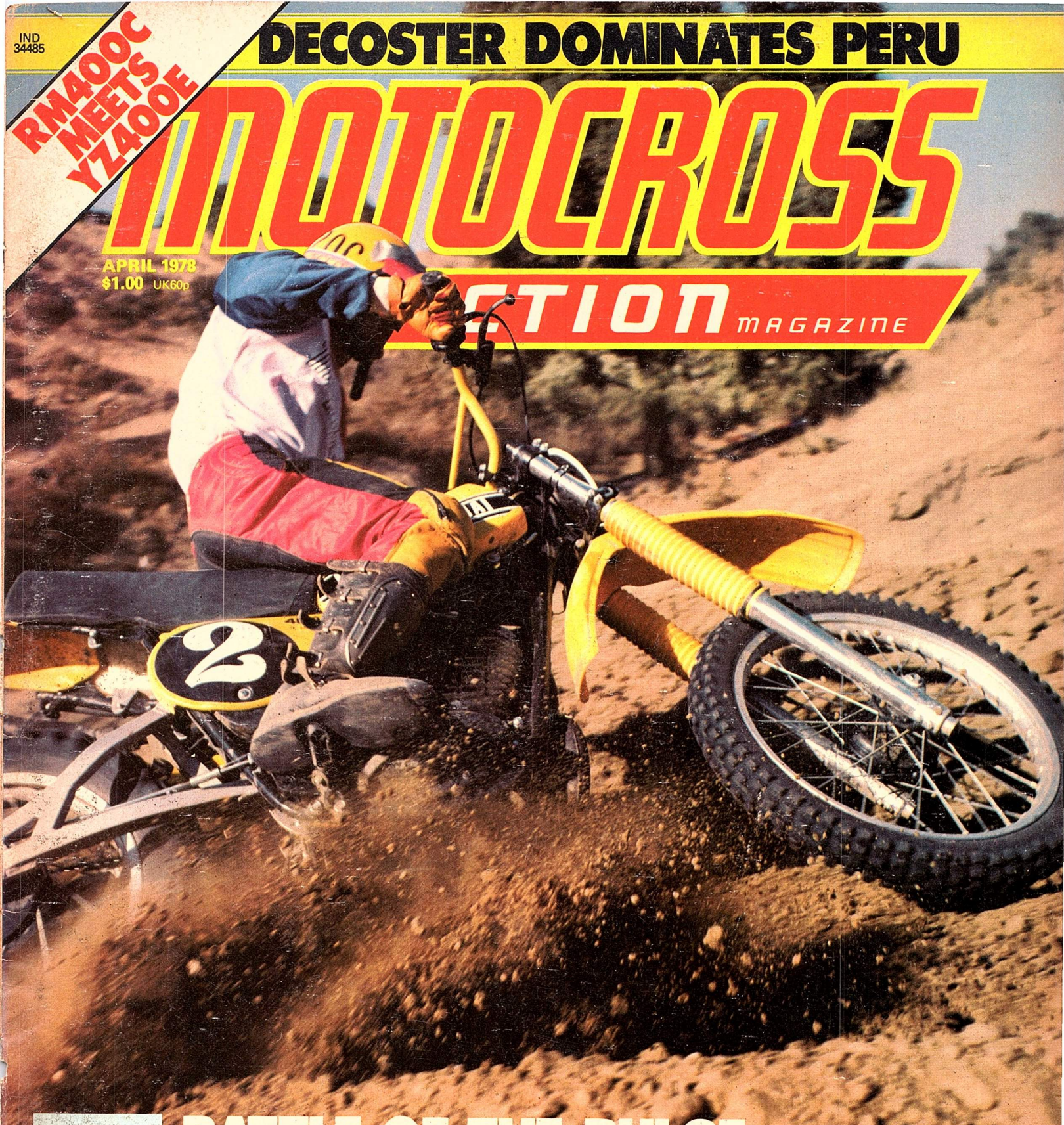

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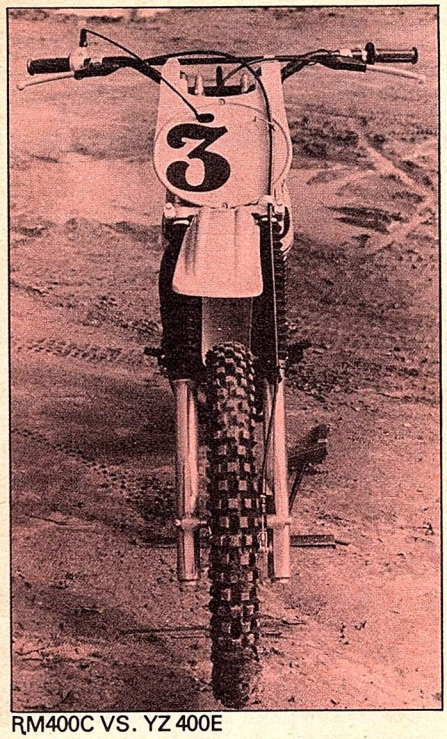
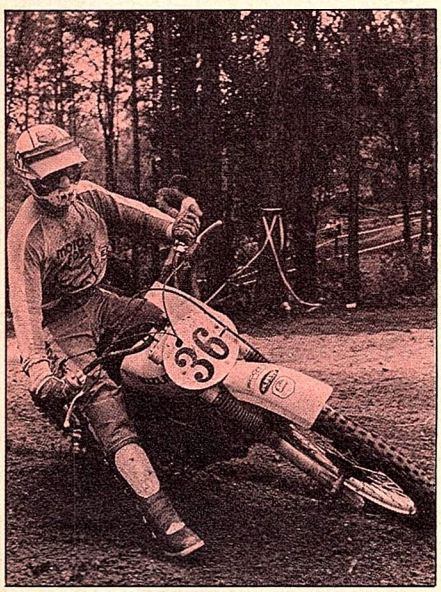


RM400C VS. YZ 400E

HODAKA 250



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NUMBER FOUR

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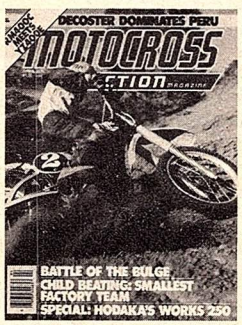

COVER: The YZ400E explodes out of a fabled California clod berm. Photographer Dennis Cox used a Nikkormat and track shoes to capture this moment.

MOTOCROSS ACTION (April '78) is published monthly by Hi-Torque Publications, Inc., with editorial offices at 16200 Ventura Blvd., Encino, California 91436. Subscriptions $9.00 for 12 issues (one year). Foreign $2.00 per year additional for postage (Canada add $1.00 per year).

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Second class postage paid at Van Nuys, California 91408, and at additional mailing offices. MOTOCROSS ACTION MAGAZINE, P.O. Box 317, Encino, California 91316.

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On The Mainjet

By Dick Miller

"We can't all be heroes, because somebody has to sit on the curb and clap as they go by."

— Will Rogers

My first trophy was something special to me. It was my first competitive event, or for that matter, my first involvement in anything riding a motorcycle. I was overwhelmed by the situation, feeling sure that I was in over my head. More importantly, I felt like an outsider, as most novices must feel when attempting similar endeavors, be they in sports, business or whatever.

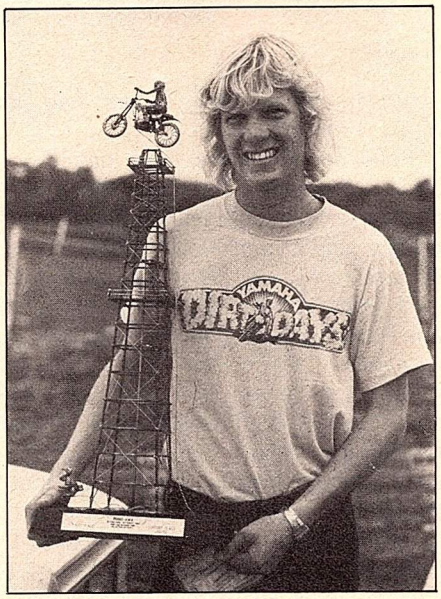
The event was the Hi-Mountain Enduro, and I had agreed to enter after talking to some friends who were experienced racers and had competed in the event before. It had a reputation for being a tough enduro, and was held in the rugged mountains and countryside of San Luis Obispo, on California's coastline. It was one of the special events of the year and entries were tough to get unless you knew someone, which my friends did. At the time there were very few off-road bikes, and I, like many riders, rode a converted street Triumph. Basically, my conversion was simply removing unneeded street items such as side panels, etc., and changing the tires to a universal tread type. It was a good bike, but it looked inadequate next to equipment ridden by Bud Ekins or Steve McQueen, who were also competing. In those days there were a lot of modifications for Triumphs, as there are now for any new bike, but you really don't learn the necessity of them until you gain some experience and learn why you need these modifications. That's why I was a novice, obviously, but I still felt intimidated by the whole thing.

At the time the Hi-Mountain Enduro was 150 miles long and started at dawn from the campus of the University of Cal Poly. There were quite a few spectators, mostly because of the name riders — Steve McQueen in particular. I had an early number and was fortunate enough to have two of my friends on the same minute with me. My main concern was to not slow them down and show that I could keep up. Less than ten miles out one of my friends broke a chain and had some other problems, and told me to go ahead. My other friend was always so far ahead that I hardly ever saw him except when he'd stop to wait, thinking a checkpoint was due ahead and not wanting to be early. It was all I could do to stay on time, and I was all over the place trying to keep a motorcycle that weighed over twice my weight upright on slippery trails and steep hills. The more I rode, the fewer riders I saw. Just when I was sure I was lost, there would be a checkpoint. After the noon check I noticed that the number of riders had dwindled even further. I had been so involved in trying to keep up that I hadn't noticed all the dropouts.

As the day progressed and I struggled, I realized that it was really a test of endurance. It seemed as if I was all alone on the course, which made the time pass even slower. There was barely an hour left of daylight when I exited the mountains and saw the outskirts of the campus finish line. I had been riding since dawn and for the last two hours of the event I had not seen another rider. I was sure something had happened and I had missed the course somehow, or the event had been stopped and I had somehow been missed. I had wanted to quit long before, but I didn't know where I was so I had kept going. When I rode into the finish there were only a few people standing around, since it was very cold and almost dark. Not wanting to be dumb, I let them take my tank card without asking any questions as to how I did. I assumed that since nobody said anything, I must have finished. Later, listening to my friends bench race, I felt good. I was the only one of our group who had finished . . . I hoped! Weeks later, when the results came in the mail, I learned that I had finished third 500cc Novice and had trophied. It had turned out to be a tough enduro with few finishers, but due to my inexperience I thought it was a normal event. I was hooked. I was determined that it was not going to be my last trophy!

In those days trophies were not so easily earned or given away so capriciously. One of the reasons was cost, since most were made of wood or metal of some sort and mass-production of

Win the eight-race Trans-AMA series and you get the unique trophy on the left complete with plastic rider. Win the two-race Motocross of the Americas and you get the goodies on the right. The Inca replica goblets are silver.



Broc Glover received this nice memento from Rabbit Run, Texas, promoters for winning the Support class. DeCoster received one also for the 500 class win.

trophies was yet to come. Another was the then-accepted concept of trophying based on performance no matter how many entries were involved. With the advent of giving trophies for just competing in an event and paying high ratios of trophies, it has come to mean less to the individuals who win them. I have heard more than one rider at a motocross braggingly complain as he picks up his trophy that he's already got one just like it and he wonders where he'll put it. Of course, he will also be the first one to bitch about not getting one when a promoter hedges on the percentage paid out.

Receiving a trophy for achieving something significant is much more satisfying than receiving one for something that isn't. We all know when we are worthy of such a trophy and regard it with more importance, no matter what it looks like. In most cases a trophy for winning a championship or a prestigious event is worthy of the receiver and is something you would be proud to display. It also reflects the importance allocated to the event by the promoter(s). I should say . . . most of the time.

The trophy Roger DeCoster received from the AMA for winning the supposedly prestigious Trans-AMA is embarrassing to me and to many who have seen it. It is the same trophy Tony DiStefano received for recognition as the AMA Professional Athlete Of The Year. Hopefully Tony's had his name on it, since Roger's didn't. Admittedly these are professional riders who compete for money, so you could argue the point. But you spend money, you don't display it. Winning a motocross series consisting of eight races against the top riders in the U.S./world seems to me to be worthy of an award at least greater than one given out at a local two-moto Sunday event, which this award wasn't. Winning a World Championship earns the recipient gold medals or something worthy of its importance from the FIM. The Trans-AMA is our championship, and an 8x10-inch piece of wood with a plaque without the rider's name and a small plastic rider shows very little regard or thought by the people involved as to the event's importance. To show you the significance Peru gives its Motocross of the Americas championships, which involve *two* days of racing, I borrowed Roger's awards for winning that event and his Trans-AMA award and photographed them for this column. Peruvians obviously think very highly of their event and whoever wins it.

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Jody's Box

By Jody Weisel

☐ In my bathroom hanging above the toilet is a faded photo of me working the back section of Dallas International Motor Speedway on a 125 GP road racer! Every morning I walk in there with absolutely zero will to live, no interest in donning leathers and Jofa again, and hardly enough pulse to sustain a goldfish. While I'm rubbing the sleep from my eyes and trying to decide whether it was worth actually opening my lids up, my first sight is of that photo. Racing motocross as often as I do has a tendency to make it seem like work. Actually, it is my work, and I like it, but sometimes my mood gets me down, especially in the morning. On race days I have been known to accidentally shave an eyebrow off before waking fully up. In these cases I have found that black shoe polish makes an excellent replacement.

The sun isn't even up yet and I'm thinking about gathering up the premix, lemonade, clean socks, finding a set of matching gloves and getting my body to the track on time. Nine times out of ten the urge is to pack it all in and go back to bed. The only thing that stops me from snuggling back in the sack on Sunday morning is the sight of that road racer.

A couple of years ago I was racing motocross three times a week. I'd race two night races and one day race every week. After several months of this I got up one morning and went back to bed five minutes later. I woke up about 11 a.m. with an extreme guilt hangover. It was the first time I had missed a race in several years. I went into Sunday shock! I didn't know what to do with my day. Truth is that it was probably one of the most boring days of my life, but sometime during the day the thought crept into my head that I was tired of coming home three times a week physically exhausted, covered with dirt and barely covered with glory. Perhaps I would have become a CPA or gone to bartender school in my spare time if I hadn't picked up a copy of *Cycle* Magazine and spotted a photo of Jarno Saarinen, the late great road racer, surrounded by a bevy of bountiful beauties at Daytona. No doubt about it, those road racers had it made, I thought.

Road racers dress very nattily in skin-tight leather. The color combinations are quite appealing and they always stay clean. Road racers don't do any work. They lie on the tank and think about cornering. The tracks are absolutely silk-upholstered compared to a gnarly MX course. To me, road racers represented little rock and roll stars, while motocrossers were closer to the percussion section of Spike Jones' band. True or false, I felt that the obvious differences between motocross and road racing were just what I needed to find accelerated bliss.

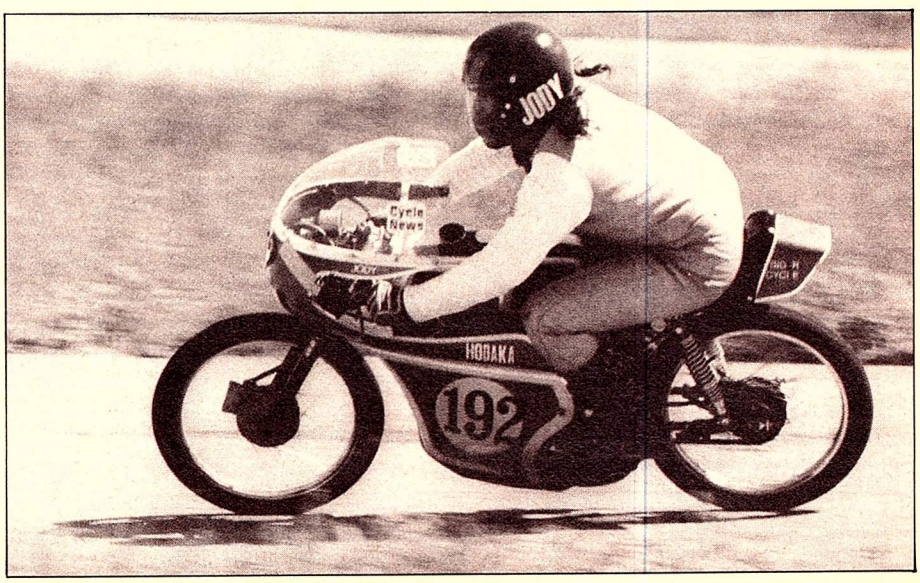
I got rid of all of my motocrossers and bought three dainty little road racers: 125, 250 and 750. Gawd, were they cute little thingies! It isn't like motocross, though. So I found myself pretty much stuck to the 250 class. To ride a 125 road racer you have to have spent three years eating the average daily diet of a Bangladesh hobo and shave every hair off of your body. Since I didn't like the way I looked with one eyebrow I was reluctant to be avant-garde and shave the other one off.

At the other end of the spectrum came the 750cc Yamaha four. My first practice laps on the 750 were my last practice laps. My eyeballs watered, my head vibrated at 12,000 rpm, my arm joints were dislocated and after three laps I came in. I would have come in after the second lap but I went by the pits before I saw them. Roger DeCoster once hopped on a Team Suzuki road racer and within a couple of laps was turning competitive times. I, on the other hand, set a different kind of track record. Dallas International Motor Speedway was just under two miles long. On my first lap I traveled two and a half miles, on my second lap I upped the track distance to three miles and on the last lap I really turned it on and it took me almost four miles to go around a two-mile track. Back in the pits an experienced road racer suggested that it wasn't necessary for me to take the escape road at the end of the straights and that my lap times would improve if I turned the corners instead of shooting past them.

I elected to race the 250 class, although I still ventured out in the 125s because I had the bike. These road race guys are a pretty picky lot. I raced just about every track in the country and not once did I see a decent starting gate. Not even anything as antiquated as a rubber band start. These guys may dress neat, but they are back in the stone age with their flag starts.

I think I could have made some major contributions to the world of road racing, but I was thwarted by these little effete snobs at every turn. During practice at one race I was setting some pretty hot times, and just beginning to

(*continued on page 70*)



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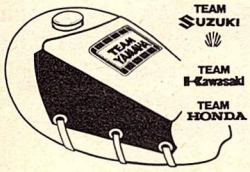

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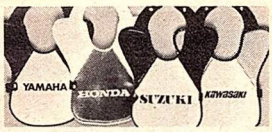

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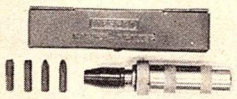

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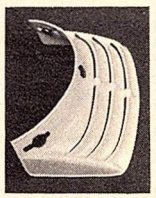

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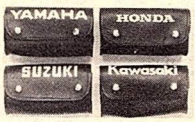

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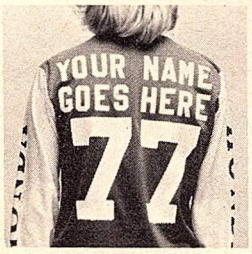

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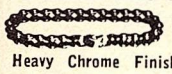

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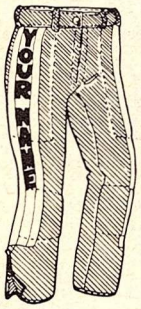

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- ☐ I'll help a troubled parent by being a good friend.
- ☐ I have a problem. I'm going to start talking about it.
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Stop the Hurt. Write:

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Box 2866
Chicago, Illinois 60690

National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse

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Mail Entries

HECKLER

Dear MXA,

Throughout the past year or so I have been getting many requests for the Heckel boot. I realize the quality of this boot and would like to pass it on to our customers. However, I can't find out who distributes the product nationally. Could you please tell me where I can contact someone who distributes these boots?

Al Clark
Dick Clark Kawasaki
Chelsea, Michigan

(Jim Gianatsis and Jody Weisel will wear nothing but the Heckel boot. Unfortunately, they are no longer being imported into the country, but there might still be a limited supply available from Bultaco International, Box 62547, Virginia Beach, Virginia 23462; phone (804) 499-8501.)

CONCERNED FOR THE FUTURE

Dear MXA,

I am very serious about becoming a National Champion. I am training a lot and will probably be ready to start racing about April. I'm 14 years old and have a new RM125 and should reach my prime by the time I'm 19, but I'm worried about the years to come when I'm a pro MXer. I think the city will close in on motocross as we know it now and it will become a domed sport surrounded by city smog and artificial dirt, and the joys of getting up in the morning and going out into the woods and racing it up will be gone. I think somebody should start being concerned or motocross will not exist as we know it for future riders.

Lynn Warford
Renton, Washington

HE WANTS TO KNOW

Dear MXA,

I'd like to know what riders like Gassin' Gaylon Mosier and Kent Howerton do, if anything, besides racing bikes for a living. I'm sure they don't grab a paycheck as large as Roger DeCoster's. Do they work in cycle shops or do they just race for a living?

Rick Burrowes
El Segundo, California

(Gaylon and Kent both just race for a living, as it is a full-time occupation for most of the factory riders. Most factory shoes draw a salary which keeps them going from race to race and are offered bonuses for any major wins. This enables them to devote full-time attention to their racing.

SHE WANTS TO KNOW

Dear MXA,

I'd like to know how I could get to be a trophy girl? I think I'm cute enough. What do I have to do?

Taffy
Painesville, Ohio

(First, send us your picture, then we'll tell you.)

FLYIN' HAWAIIAN

Dear MXA,

I'd like to submit a nomination for John DeSoto Jr. for MXA's Rider of the Year. John is still alive and racing in Hawaii (and blowing the doors off the young troops still). John continues to lead and inspire a dedicated group of 'crossers here in Hawaii.

Jon Bratten
Mokuleia, Hawaii

WANTS TO SEE THE D.

Dear MXA,

When are you going to have a picture of Tony DiStefano with his shirt off? I think he is really great and I was wondering how old he really is and when his birthday is.

Tony D. Fan
Painesville, Ohio

(By the time you see this Tony will be 21 years old. His birthday's in February; we can say no more.)

LET'S GO RACING NOW, EVERYBODY'S LEARNING HOW . . .

Dear MXA,

I just replaced my Yamaha 90 with a YZ125, and I would like to race. What I need to know is where the tracks around me are. I live in Park Forest, Illinois.

Paul Frakes
Park Forest, Illinois

Dear MXA,

I am interested in starting racing motocross, and would like to know how

I can get my license and where I can race in my area.

Gilbert Blair
Houston, Texas

Dear MXA,

I'm going to race motocross this summer. I've never raced before, although I've owned dirt bikes all my life. I'll need protection, so JT products are for me. How about racing in my area? Can you recommend some tracks?

Bob (Working Hard)
Union, Ohio

(*For information on tracks in your area consult* Cycle News, *a weekly racing periodical with both an Eastern and Western edition. East's address is P.O. Box 805, 4190 First Ave., Tucker, Georgia 30084; West's address is P.O. Box 498, 2201 Cherry Ave., Long Beach, California 90801.*)

MX HALL OF FAME

Dear MXA,

My trip to the motocross hall of fame (January '78 "Dirt") will not be complete unless I see:

1. Ake's #27 Trans-Am Maico;
2. Gary Jones' lace-up boots;
3. Lars' titanium Husky;
4. Tim Hart's full-face helmet, w/stripes;
5. A BSA thumper from the Trans-Am series.

John Fischer
Evanston, Illinois

MFOY, ROY

Dear MXA,

Now that we've got the ROY award, how about an MFOY (Moto-Fox Of the Year) award? I nominate Debbie Evans. Tell Jody that 30 minutes of jumping rope equals three hours of jogging.

Jamie Fowler
Cincinnati, Ohio

RIPPED OFF IN MICHIGAN

Dear MXA,

I got ripped off this year. You see, here in Michigan you have to belong to District 14 in lower Michigan. It started off at the E.Z. Ride Raceway where I got my card. At the end of the year I was doing real well and should have

(*continued on page 71*)

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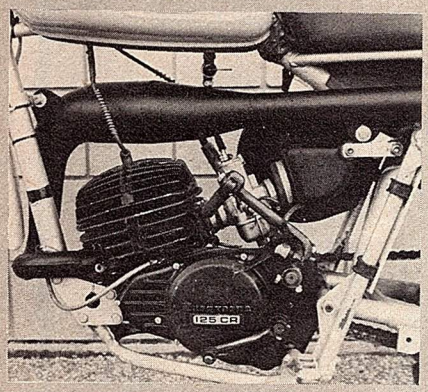

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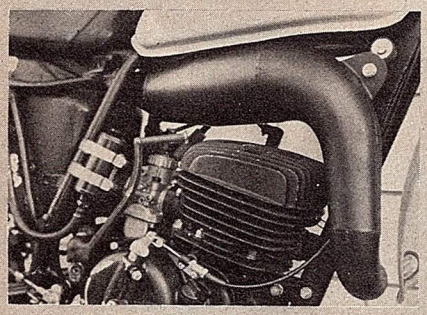

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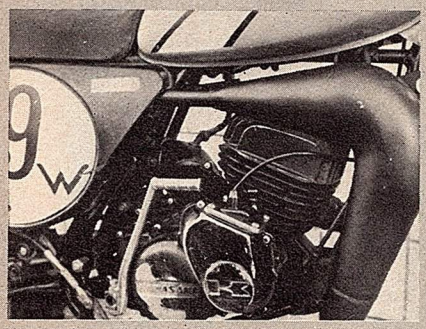

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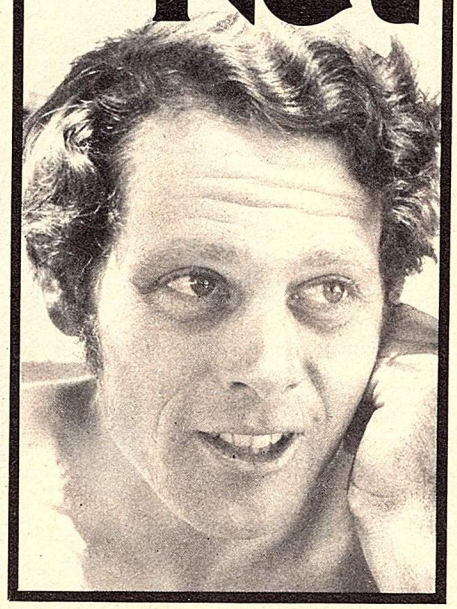

By Al Baker

ALL THE WAY

After reading the Bengt Aberg four-stroke article, I became interested in building an open class "thumper." Actually, I have been interested in four-strokes for quite a while, and at one time wanted to build a Honda thumper like your "muffin." My question is, would a TT500 Yamaha be competitive for MX with the following mods: Marzocchi forks, trick swingarm, long travel shocks, and various other mods to increase horsepower and decrease weight, but nothing really radical? Also, would the Marzocchi forks I am presently using on my YZ250 monoshock fit the stock TT500 frame? I would greatly appreciate any reply and would like to congratulate you on your fine moto-mag!

Mike Hahn
Rowland Heights, California

In all honesty, I love four-stroke racers as much as you do. The only drawback in building a competitive racing machine is money. The Bengt Aberg replica is probably the best you could buy. It would be the same as building a works bike from the ground up, but your R&D work has already been done by Torsten Hallman. Competing on a four-stroke also requires a strong will from the rider. The four-stroke power will work better than a two-stroke in most places. The only drawback is the tall engine's weight. Once a rider learns how and when to use the power versus weight he should have no trouble staying ahead of his two-stroke competition. Your idea about modifying a TT500 is out of the question when you ask: competitive? The TT500 can be improved for comfort and power but will never be competitive as a motocross machine. The modifications you've mentioned would make the TT a fine scoot. Your Marzocchi forks will easily bolt in place, but still won't make you a competitive four-stroker. My suggestion is, if you're going to build one, do it right or don't do it at all.

PURPLE BEL-RAY

I have been using Bel-Ray MC-1 in my KX400 all this season and have had very good results with it. Today, when I was mixing up a batch of fuel, I noticed that one of two tubes I had was green in color and the oil in the other was purple. When I poured the purple MC-1 in the green, it sank to the bottom. Is Bel-Ray changing their oil on me, or what? Do you know anything about this?

Dan Van De Vanter
Lyle, Washington

There is nothing to worry about. Earlier this year, Bel-Ray added a purple dye to their oil. When the green oil was mixed with gas, there was really no way of telling if the fuel was mixed or not. Using the purple dye, you cannot make a mistake. The MC-1 formula is still the same.

RICHTER'S SUSPENSION PROBLEM

I have a stock RM125B and have this problem with the suspension. I practice on a rough track, easily as rough as Carlsbad, and I occasionally bottom out my suspension, sometimes fiercely. Now, Suzuki says to use 20 psi in the front and 20-weight oil. Since the bottoming occurred, I've stayed with the 20-weight oil, but have been forced to go to 25 psi to save the forks. I don't have to tell you that the front end is a little stiff at this pressure. I've asked a friend about the problem, and he says that the bike should bottom out once in a while in the rough parts of the track, so I'll be using all or most of

my travel throughout the rest of the track. What do you think of this theory? Also, just exactly what are the different roles of the air, oil and springs in the operation of the forks? I've heard of shortening the preload spacer and going to a lighter oil — what about that? Almost forgot — I weigh 180 pounds. I know I'm heavy for a 125, but I can still pass people on the uphill at Carlsbad. I will really appreciate any advice. Thanks.

P. Richter
Team Rancho Loco
Cardiff, California

I have never had any luck with the "air/spring" fork design. Either the forks are too stiff or too soft and never follow the ground. So I asked a Japanese engineer to explain the theory behind the fork action, as I did not understand. This man is one of the leading motorcycle engineers in the world, and he had no explanation for the design — only that he and his workers never ride motorcycles, but only copy a design that is rumored to work. In the case of your air/spring fork, obviously their rumor came from an up source. My only conclusion is that when your forks are competing, the spring rate does not grow, but only increases at the rate it started at, and the damping grows severely stiffer. In other words, the air and spring combination is working against the damping forces, which is exactly the opposite of what I feel it should be. The growing rate of a properly designed spring should work in parallel with progressive damping forces. Your friend's idea of bottoming your suspension at least once on the track is exactly right. But, the first inch or two of travel must be very soft or mushy to absorb ruts, rocks or mud. Compressed air or nitrogen gas has never allowed my forks to move quickly enough to absorb such obstacles. Your idea of removing springs and replacing oil to correct the poor design will only slow up the forks, making no substantial improvement. Either you must live with what you've got, or replace the entire damping and spring system with components made by American engineers for American riders. ///

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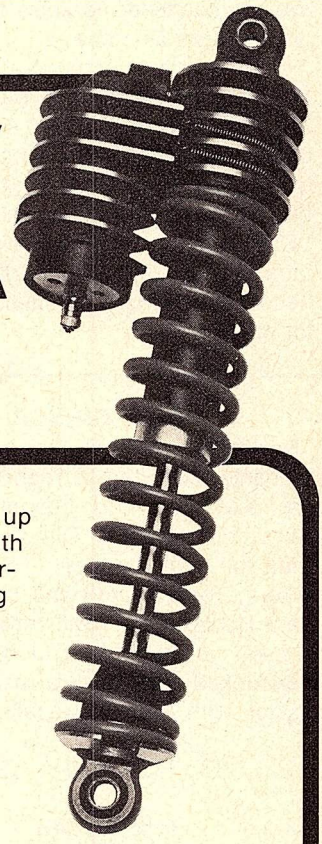

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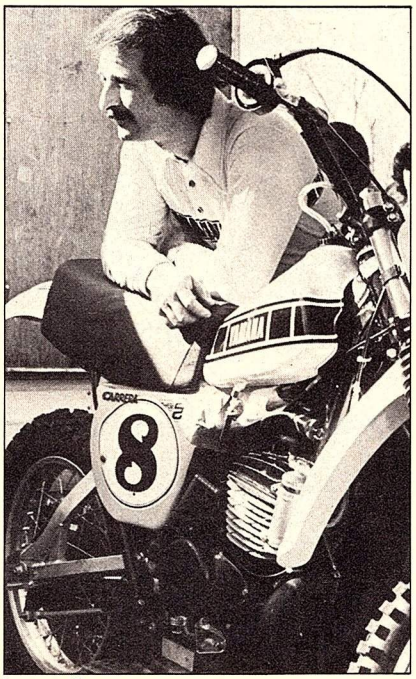
Dirt

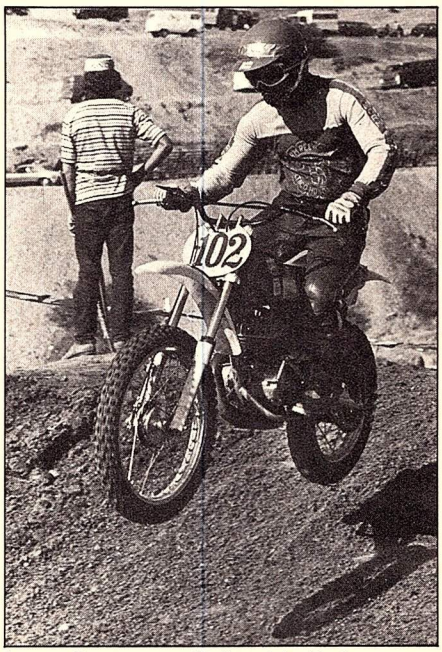
LARRY CARPENTER 1945-1978

Larry Carpenter died suddenly during the professional motocross off-season. Larry was Rick Burgett's mechanic and he suffered a heart attack a week after being involved in an automobile accident. Larry had a lot of friends who will miss him dearly because Larry was a dear friend. He never missed a chance to say hello, cast a quick joke into a conversation or join in the fun. We are saddened to know that he will not be there anymore.

We know that Larry was happy with his life and pleased to be a part of American motocross. He lived out his dream and became an important part of the sport he loved. Whether racing his trusty Pursang, cruising in his "Orange Crush" van or wrenching on a factory OW Yamaha, Larry lived the life he loved. We wish he could have had a lot more of it.



Larry Carpenter.



Larry Carpenter flying his Bul across Saddleback.

TUNER TURNER

Roy Turner, the most famous Honda mechanic, switched to Team Kawasaki over the winter to become Jimmy Weinert's mechanic. Turner, who has tuned for Rich Eierstedt, Pierre Karsmakers, Tommy Croft and many other Team Honda riders, will replace Steve Johnson at Kawasaki. Johnson has been kicked upstairs to a management position with Team Kawasaki.

□ □ □ □

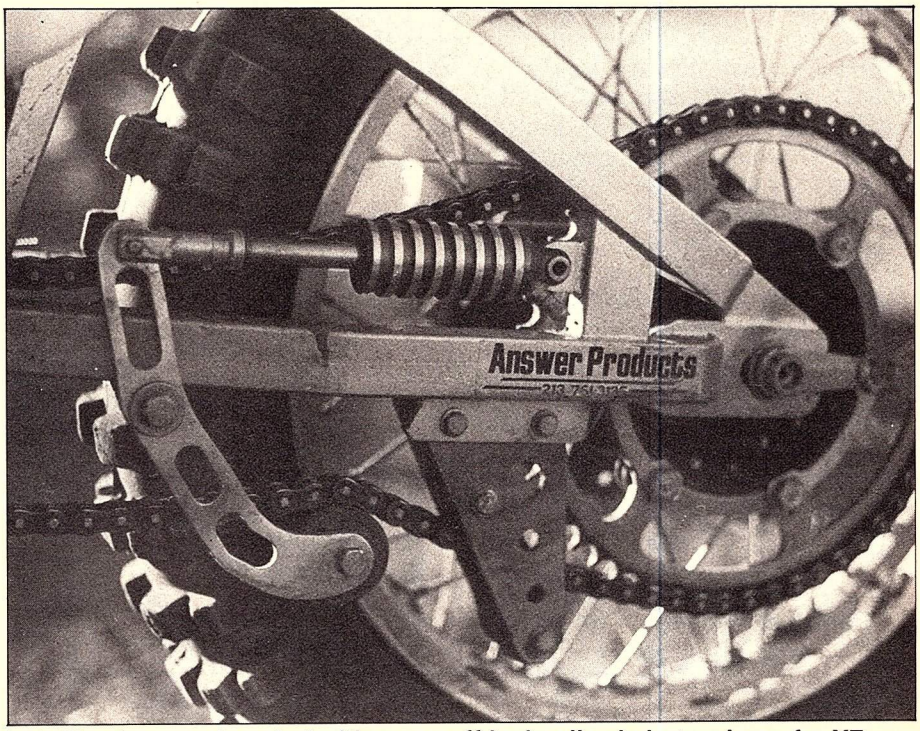
THE TEAMS

All of the team switching is not complete yet, but here is a possible picture of what it will look like for the coming National Motocross Championships. Team Honda will be the largest team with a possible seven riders. Warren Reid and Steve Wise will contest all the 125 Nationals. Jimmy Ellis and Jim Pomeroy will be Honda's 250 team and Marty Smith and Tommy Croft will pursue the Open class title. Smith varied all during the off-season on whether he was going to ride the 250 or 500 class. The question mark of Team Honda is Marty Tripes. Honda has approached him, but Japan has yet to loosen up the funds to hire a seventh rider.

Team Suzuki will have Mark Barnett in the 125 class and Danny LaPorte to contest the 500s. Tony DiStefano and Kent Howerton will be bidding for the 250 title. DiStefano will be trying for a record-setting fourth National Championship.

Kawasaki will field one rider for each of the three classes: Gaylon Mosier in the 125s, Jimmy Weinert in the 250s and Steve Stackable in the 500s.

Team Yamaha will remain the same in 1978 as it was in 1977. Broc Glover will race the 125 class, Bob Hannah and Pierre Karsmakers will probably contest the 250 class and Rick Burgett



Luft Shocks experimented with a one-off hydraulic chain tensioner for YZ monos. It is not for sale, but it is interesting.

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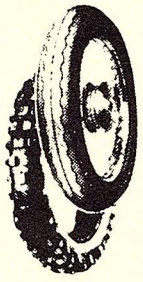

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CH172	400/450 x 18	6	**$24.50**
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GY130	450 x 18	4	**$41.48**
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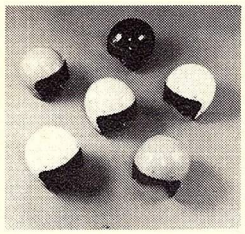

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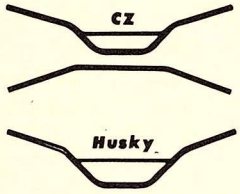

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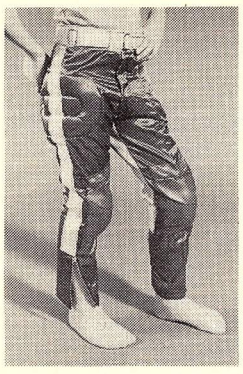

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Dirt

will be joined by Mike Bell in the Open class.

Can-Am will field the final large team, with four members: Ken Zahrt, Rich Eierstedt, Gary Semics and Terry Clark. Maico, after the loss of Stackable and Mosier, will not be officially entering any team. Husqvarna will be sponsoring Chuck Sun and possibly Marty Moates. Ossa, Bultaco and Montesa have not announced any plans for the 1978 season. Harley-Davidson will race the 250 Nationals with Mickey Boone in the saddle.

□ □ □ □

JT JERSEYS

For those of you suffering from a severe case of brand loyalty, JT Racing, the emporium of fine racing wear, is releasing a new line of jerseys with bike logos on the front, the most famous of which is the Heikki Mikkola replica Yamaha jersey. All of the major brands will be available in special JT designs.

□ □ □ □

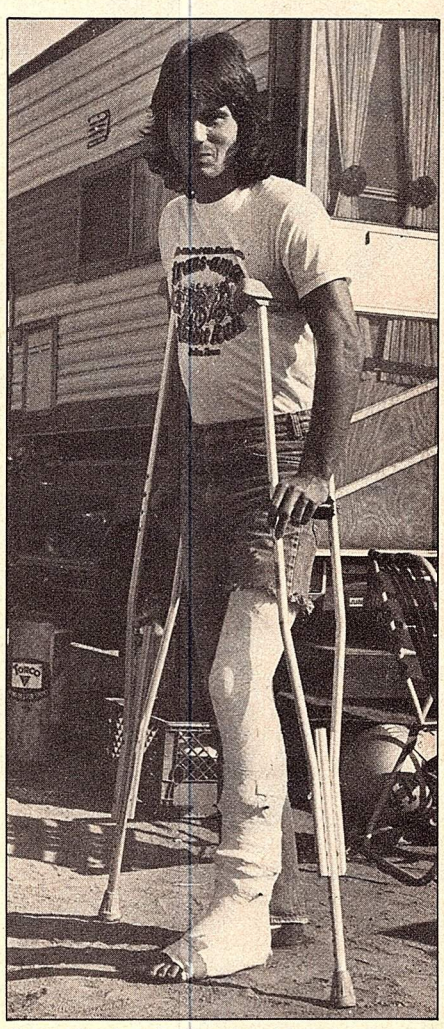
HELMET ADVICE

If you are a member of the crasher brigade, be advised that it is best to have your helmet checked by the factory after any extremely hard blows. Most companies operate a service that will make sure that your helmet is operational. The second thing to remember is that your helmet's serviceable life is only about one to two years. If you are trying to squeak a year or more out of your old skid lid, you are taking an unnecessary chance.

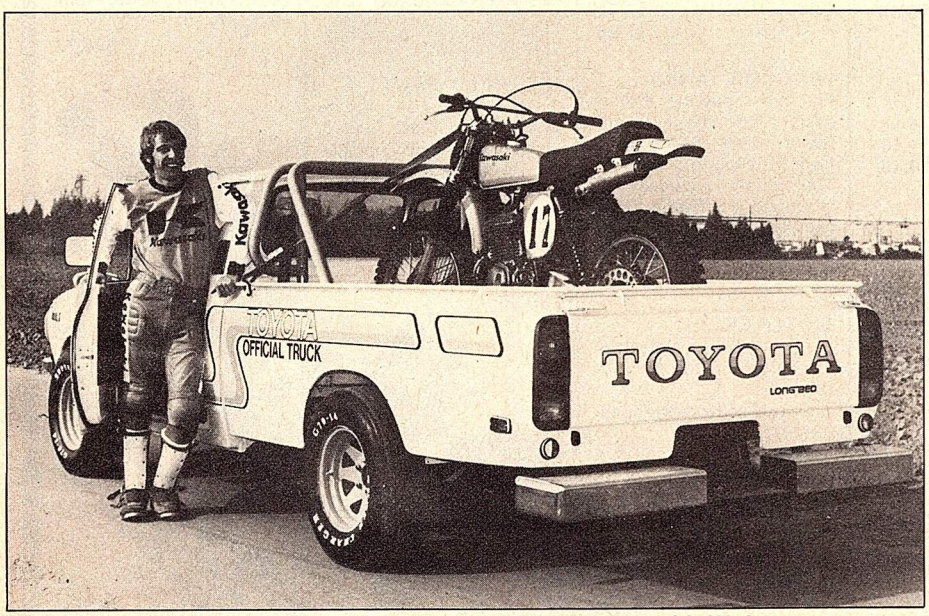
□ □ □ □

FISH TALE

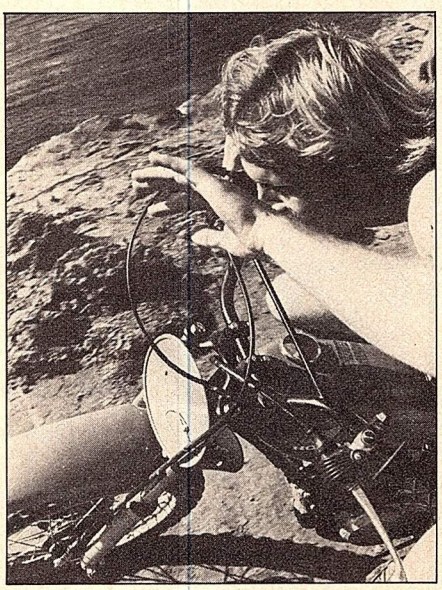
National Women's Motocross Champion Sue Fish has vowed that 1978 will be the year that she will attempt to race the 125 National Championships. Fish earned some AMA qualifier points in 1977 and is eligible to race. Hangtown and Racing World are the first two 125 Nationals and they are both in California where Sue lives. If she does well, the rest of the country may get to see the fastest of the women.



Gary Ogden is hoping to get sponsored by Johnson & Johnson next year.



Toyota has been named the official truck of Team Kawasaki. Weinert, Stackable and Mosier will be presented specially prepared pickups in 1978.



Gary Semics tried to avoid the probing camera, but the news leaked out that he is signing with Can-Am.

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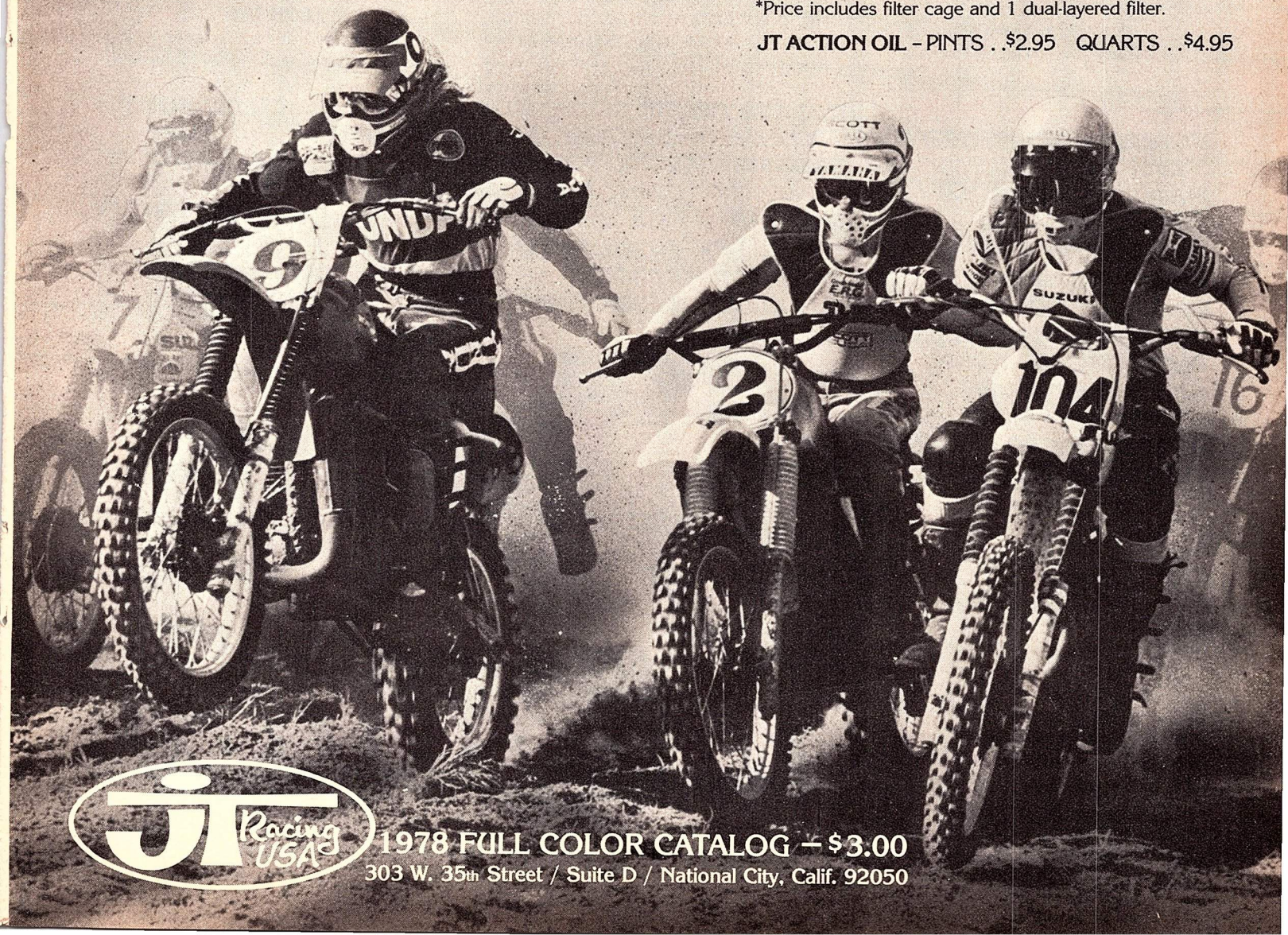

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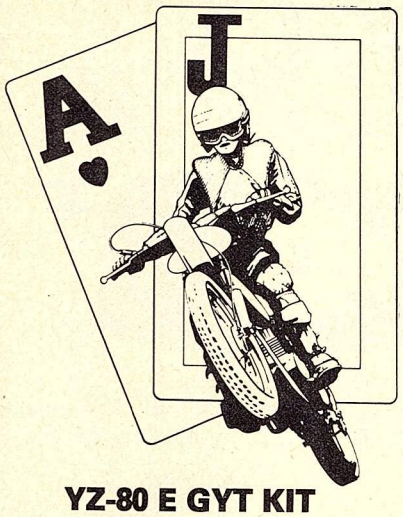

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Dirt

AMA BUDGET INCREASE

After years of catering to the Grand National circuit, the AMA has finally hired an assistant for Professional Motocross Manager Mike DiPrete. DiPrete, and before him Light Brown Lancione, had to operate the complete AMA MX program alone, while hordes of AMA types worked on the short-track and mile circuits. Carrol Chandler has been named assistant to Mike DiPrete and now the two of them will try to operate the 42-race American motocross season.

□ □ □ □

EUROPEAN NEWS

Gerrit Wolsink has penned his 1978 Suzuki contract, but neither Roger DeCoster nor Gaston Rahier have signed theirs. Gaston has recovered from his serious accident and is training to get back in shape, but has not come to terms with Suzuki. Roger DeCoster, who originally said that 1978 would be his last racing year, is seeking a multi-year contract, since it will be his last anticipated contract.

□ □ □ □

THE EQUAL TIME RULE

MXA has been pointing out to the American Motorcyclist Association a few of their flaws over the past few years. In many conversations the AMA officials have pointed out a few of our flaws. But they have remained silent about the 125 controversy, the Ogden incident and other recent editorials. We have not been ignoring their side of the story. We have presented both sides in every story, but to help clear up the matter MXA has offered them space to rebut or confess. The AMA has simply declined to speak.

□ □ □ □

TECH TIP

Do not clean your air cleaner in the solvent tank. If you do, all of those little

Remember This Profile. Lower the height of the bike for better starts, but increase ground clearance. Increase horsepower, but reduce weight. Put more travel front and rear, but make stability and handling even better. That's what Maico engineers did in one year. They call it the Magnum. In 250, 400 and 450 models you'll find a new engine with a new one-plug cylinder head, Hans Maisch porting, the chain sprocket moved next to the swing arm pivot to deliver performance through a chain 12 links shorter... new 14.1 Corte Cosso gas shocks in the rear...a unique trouble free solid state ignition and much more. The Magnum is changing the sport and it could change the kind of year you're going to have. See your Maico dealer now.

It's a whole new feeling!

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Mark Blackwell (left) jokes with Roger D. during a Trans-AMA pause. Blackwell, former 500 National Champion, will be Team Suzuki Race Manager this year.

Free '78 Brochure

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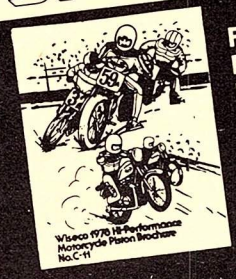

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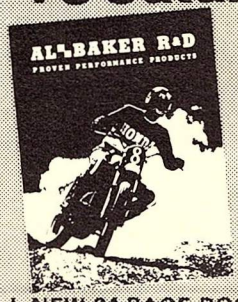

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Dirt

metal shavings and dirt particles you cleaned out of your lower engine will go right back in.

□ □ □ □

NO KIDDING

In sunny Southern California the biggest local racing organization is the Continental Motosports Club (CMC). If you have been complaining about your local promoter's crazy rules, wait till you hear some of these. You have to enter the race by mail. If your entry doesn't get there by Wednesday you have to pay an additional couple of bucks at sign-up. If you win your class on Sunday you don't get a trophy. You have to call up the promoter and tell him that you will be out at the race next week, and he will bring you a trophy. To put the topping on all of this, there are no results given out on race day. If you win or lose you don't really know

1978 WORLD MOTOCROSS CHAMPIONSHIP SCHEDULE

500 MOTOCROSS

April 9	Switzerland
April 16	Austria
April 30	France
May 7	Denmark
May 21	Finland
May 28	Sweden
June 4	Carlsbad, U.S.A.
June 11	Italy
July 2	Great Britain
August 6	Belgium
August 13	Luxembourg
August 27	Netherlands

250 MOTOCROSS

April 9	Spain
May 7	Italy
May 21	Czechoslovakia
May 28	Yugoslavia
June 4	Austria
June 11	West Germany
June 18	Great Britain
July 2	France
July 30	Unadilla, U.S.A.
August 13	Sweden
August 20	Finland
August 27	Russia

125 MOTOCROSS

April 9	Austria
April 16	Italy
April 23	Belgium
April 30	Netherlands
May 7	France
May 21	Yugoslavia
May 28	West Germany
June 4	Switzerland
June 11	Poland
July 23	Mid-Ohio, U.S.A.
August 13	Spain
August 27	Czechoslovakia

Sometimes one reservoir isn't enough. In that case, just stack them up.

unless you request that the results be mailed to you the next week. Count your blessings. Who are the races being run for, the rider or the promoter?

□ □ □ □

PRIVATEER'S DELIGHT

If you are a privateer racer, there is a chance to make a few bucks on the side. But only if you race Bultaco, Maico or Montesa. Bultaco is set to budget a quarter of a million dollars in contingency payments to Bultaco privateers. For winning a National or Supercross race Bultaco will pay $1000, and $10,000 for a Championship. Bultaco has also set aside money for the 500 and 250 USGPs amounting to $5000 for a win. There are also Bultaco contingency programs set up with the New England Sports Committee, Continental Motosport Club and the National Motorcycle League.

Maico will pay a rider a $25 parts allowance just for finishing a National Championship moto on a Maico Magnum. Also, the top Maico rider in the 250 and 500 National series will get a bike, parts, gas money and a hotel allowance for the 1978 Trans-AMA series. Moto wins in any of the Nationals earns $1000, while an overall win pays $3000. A National Championship on a Maico is worth a $25,000 bonus.

Montesa, in the true enlightened way, has decided to offer contingencies to the National-caliber riders, but more importantly is offering to pay a $25 parts allowance to any rider who wins any race locally on a Montesa. $15 in parts for second and $10 in parts for third, and all you have to do is have the local cycle papers run your name and bike brand in the results. A kudo to Montesa for offering something for the Junior, Intermediate and Expert local racer.

□ □ □ □

THAT'S A SWITCH

Torao Suzuki, who last year set the Grand Prix circuit on its ear, has left Suzuki and joined Team Montesa. Suzuki, who won a Grand Prix last year on Suzuki, will be joining teammates Raymond Boven and Jean Paul Mingels in the 250 class. Suzuki becomes the first Japanese rider to switch to a European brand.

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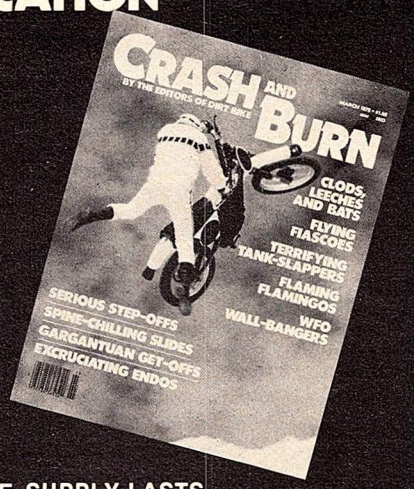

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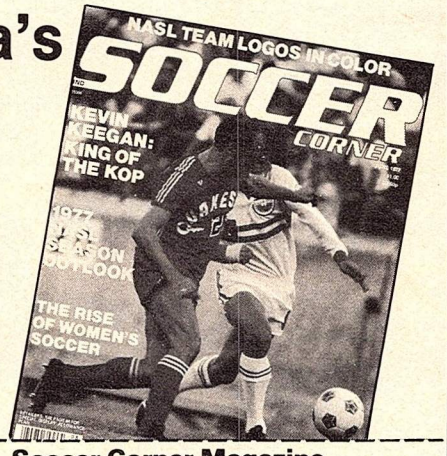

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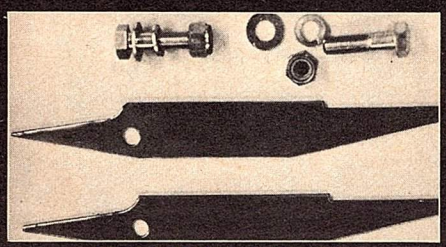
And we're willing to make a trade. You give us that fine-looking Parnelli Jones Arctic Jacket and we'll give you a 36-flavor all-day sucker. Made of 100-percent nylon with polyester fiber fill (the jacket, not the girl), you can almost feel the snuggly warmth this item would bring. Priced at only $29.95 plus $2 for postage and handling, it can be yours (the jacket, that is) by sending a check or money order to Parnelli Jones Racing, Dept. MXA, 20555 Earl Street, Torrance, California 90503. California residents add $1.80 for Jerry Brown.



MOVE 'EM UP, HOE!

Cycle Products West has designed and produced a swingarm conversion kit for Honda CR125/250s that will allow forward mounting of the rear shocks — an inexpensive modification should you not have the bucks for the new CR replica. It won't turn that old scoot into a Marty Smith replica, but it will enable you to get a little more travel for the rear end. All you need is a torch and $14.99. Contact Cycle Products West, 11900 W. Pico Blvd., Dept. MXA, Los Angeles, California 90064.

WANTED: FACTORY RIDER

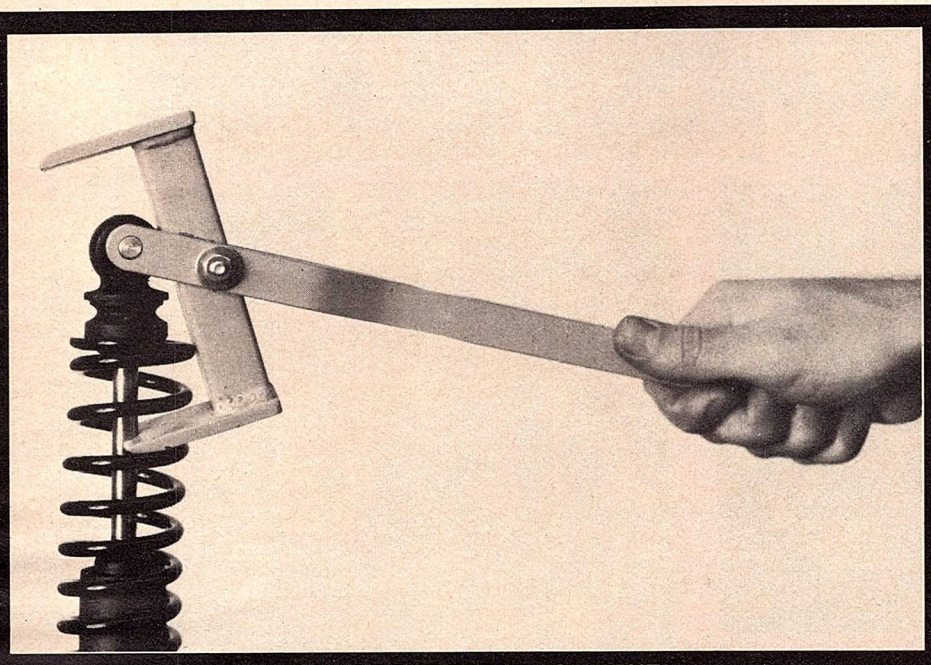
Small West German firm seeks riders capable of challenging Japanese factories for National Championship. Maico U.S.A. has put up over half a million dollars' worth of new Maico Magnums, parts, rebates and sponsorships in an attempt to find a grass roots rider capable of beating the established factory stars. According to Eckart Schorn, Maico U.S.A. general manager, "This may just help us find that rider who's headed for the top." Schorn says, "We want to see some new faces who can go fast on Maicos." If you'd like a copy of the brochure listing awards and how to apply, send 25 cents to Maico U.S.A., Dept. 2, Rider Support Program, Dept. MXA, 109 Electric Avenue, Lewistown, Pennsylvania 17044.

SAVE IT FOR THE MOVIES

Should you, after achieving motocross stardom, want to become the Clint Eastwood of the berm-bashing set, then JT offers a new face guard to protect those rugged good looks. They're made over in Finland by a company named Sinisalo and are known as Flying Finn Protectors after, you guessed it, the Flying Finn, Heikki Mikkola. This is the one you've been seeing on Smith, Lackey, Hannah and other top pros' helmets. Available for $8.95 from JT Racing, 303 W. 35th Street, Suite D, Dept. MXA, National City, California 92050; (714) 479-9696.

CAN-DO

Feast your eyes on the new lineup from Lubri-Tech. Three juicy numbers just waiting to give you their all. Nozzle up and give 'em a squeeze. Just make sure your schnozz isn't looking in the nozz. Lubri-Tech's new lineup also does away with those nasty fluorocarbon propellants which have been eating up the atmosphere. Three lubes are available, a "clean lube" for street use, an off-road lube for dirt roost and a competition lube for high-speed, super-hot-running chains. Available from your Lubri-Tech dealer or write Lubri-Tech Products, 7106 Barry Avenue, Dept. MXA, Rosemont, Illinois 60018.



TOOL OF THE ESTABLISHMENT

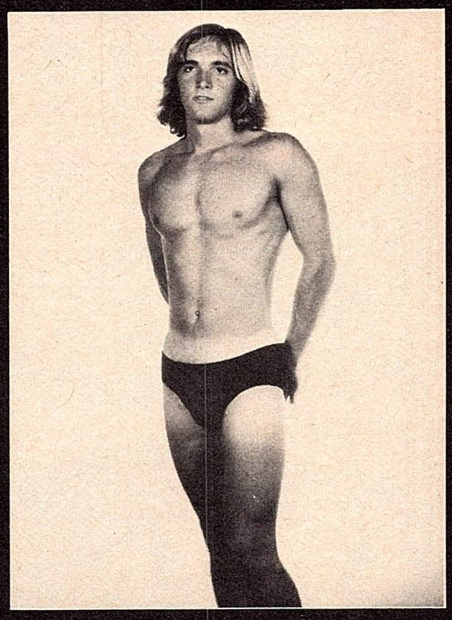
With the new Ken Ross shock spring installer, you won't have to look up a couple of huge buddies when it comes time to change a shock spring. With Ken's spring installer you can put on a 150-pound spring without the aid of a couple of pet gorillas. Works on either right or left-hand-wound springs. Available from Rocky Cycle Company through your local dealer.

GEARS THAT GO CRUNCH IN A FIGHT

You're battling it out with Wash-Out Willy at Goober's Gopher Hole on your Mizza Shift 250. You've just made one of the most incredible block passes of your life, and kick out the stops for the next gear only to be rudely interrupted in your finest hour by the howl of your engine over-revving by about a zillion rpm. It's at times like these that you wish you had used something other than re-refined 30-weight in the gearbox. Bel-Ray MC-4 Gear Saver Gear Oil exceeds all motorcycle racing demands (says so right on the bottle), and has a super-high film strength for absorbing heavy shock loads. It prevents erosive metal-to-metal contact and helps reduce friction. Ask for it at your dealer's.

MX OR BUST

Getting busted for speeding is no laughing matter, and if you are following the national circuit or just do a lot of freeway commuting, there will probably be a few times when you will exceed the legally posted speed limit. Electrolert has two models of their Fuzzbuster radar scanner unit. Fuzzbuster I detects radar on the X-band scale, which accounts for 95 percent of all police radar used. Fuzzbuster II is for the high-mileage or professional driver who is likely to encounter all kinds of police radar. It receives all police radar bands now in use or expected to be in use in the near future. Fuzzbuster I goes for around $90, while Fuzzbuster II should run about $125. If speed's your game, more information can be had by contacting Dale Smith at Electrolert Inc., 4949 South 25A, Dept. MXA, Troy, Ohio 45373.



"AW SHUCKS, FOLKS"

Ol' Malcolm over at Malcolm Smith Racing Products is so shy that he had the guys in the ad department put someone else's face over this picture of him in his Winners. Winners are 100-percent cotton briefs that give you support and comfort without binding, creeping or chafing under your leathers after a long moto. If you've got what it takes to win, then get something to put it in. Winners are available from the same folks who bring you the Gold Belt line. You can get Winners at your local dealer or contact Al Simon at the Gold Belt Line, P.O. Box 69129, Dept. MXA, Los Angeles, California 90069.

IF ONLY THEY MADE PISTONS AS WELL

Molylube Anti-Seize is an engine assembly lube that helps prevent seizing or galling of threads when used on engine studs, nuts and bolts. Used by top mechanics, including the Maico and Bultaco factory teams. Available in either three-ounce tubes or ten-ounce brush-top cans at leading shops everywhere. Dealers and distributors may contact Bel-Ray Company, Termalene Div., Dept. MXA, P.O. Box 526, Farmingdale, New Jersey 07727.

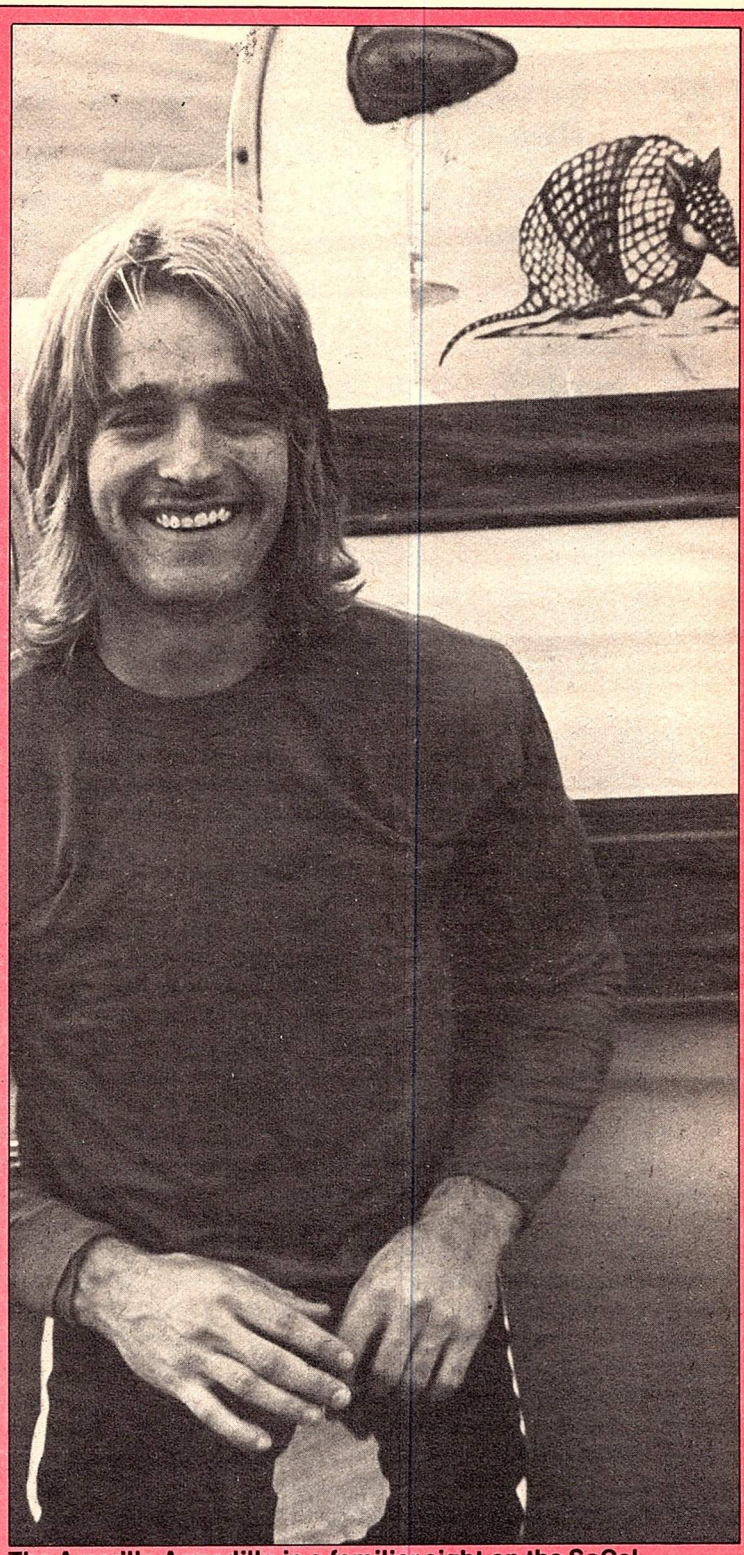
NEW SHOES TOMORROW'S

RICK BLACKWELL — TEXAS

Like his fellow Texans, Steve Stackable and Kent Howerton, Amarillo's Rick Blackwell has had to leave the hotbed of Texas motocross to gain national exposure. Had Stack and Howerton never ventured outside of Goober's Gopher Hole or Lockhart they might still be nickel-and-diming it back in Texas. Following their lead, Rick Blackwell has set his sights on a National Championship. For Rick that meant seeking out higher levels of competition, so he loaded up his 400 Mono in the back of his '58 Chevy pickup and roared off for Southern California.

If you're not from Texas you probably haven't heard of Rick Blackwell before; no one in Southern California had either until this quiet guy from Texas came to the races in a truck older than he was and started walking away with the first place cash. On a tight budget where if you don't win you don't eat, Blackwell had to be serious about racing. He showed that he could race with the factory hot-shots by grabbing the holeshot at the Sears Point Trans-AMA in the Support class on a borrowed bike. Rick is currently riding under the Yamaha support program and is also being helped out by Cross-Up Inc., a motorcycle accessory firm headquartered in Southern California.

Rick has been riding four of his 20 years, starting out on the wind-blown panhandle tracks near his home town of Amarillo, Texas. After purchasing a trusty but rusty Elsinore, Rick soon outdistanced the local competition. A trip to Mosier Valley MX Park in Dallas gave Rick a look at the competition there, which was mostly flying over his head. While visiting his sister in Austin Rick got the bug for the capitol city and moved there. It wasn't long before he was the man to beat in South Texas. Soon, trips to Mosier Valley and Lake Whitney had the competition chasing him. That's when Blackwell decided to venture out to California. For Rick Blackwell it's all been a logical progression; you keep moving up the ladder to the next higher rung of competition. So Rick is looking to ride on the National level now, and wants to take that next step up the ladder.

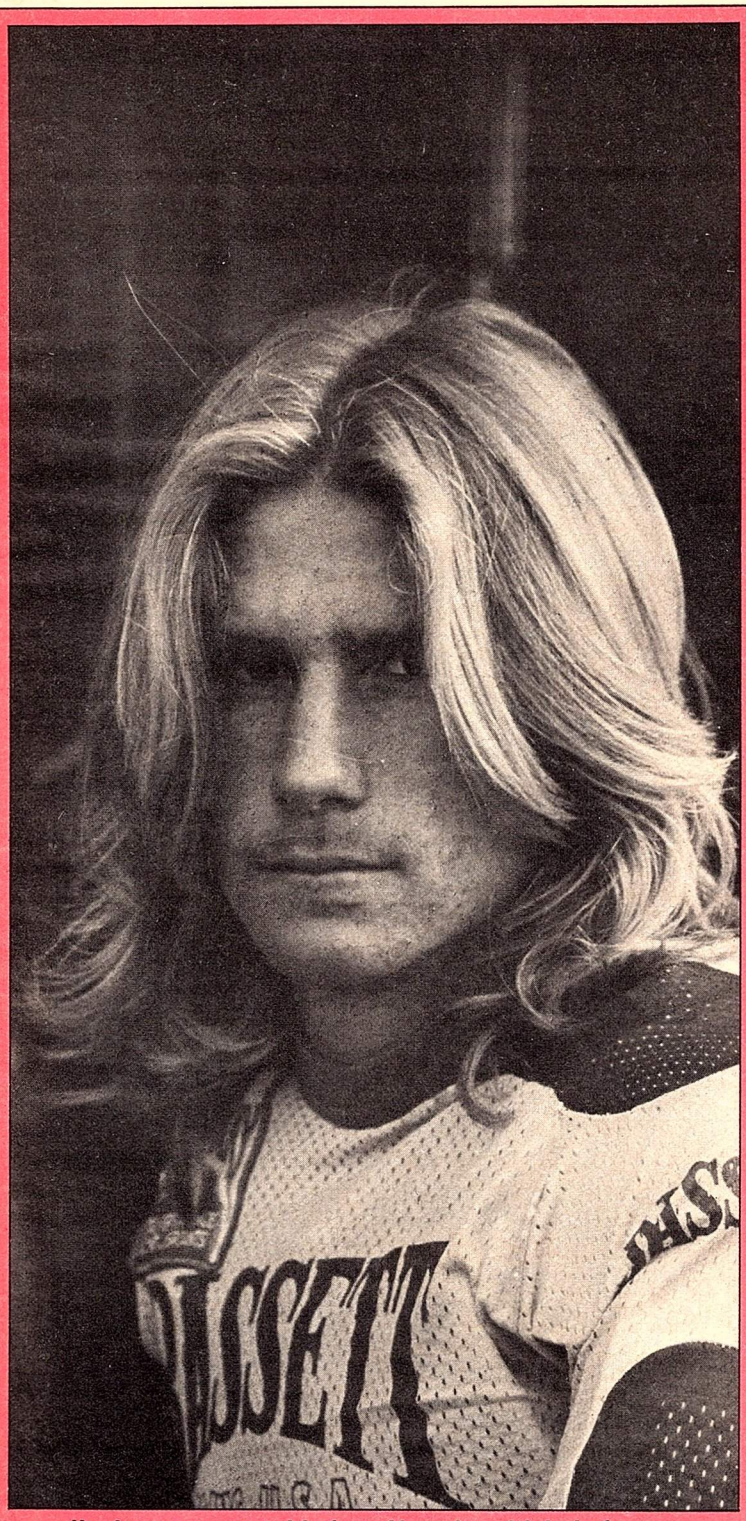


The Amarillo Armadillo is a familiar sight on the SoCal freeway MX circuit.

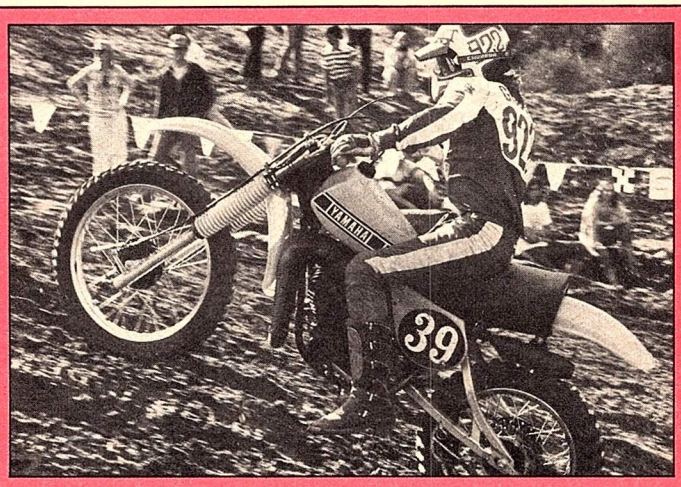
STARS

Local stars from coast to coast

By Jim Gianatsis and Dennis Cox



Jim has a support ride from Yamaha with help from Bassett Racing. Clean living and a good diet keep him in shape for racing and dicing it out with the ladies.



JIM GIBSON — CALIFORNIA

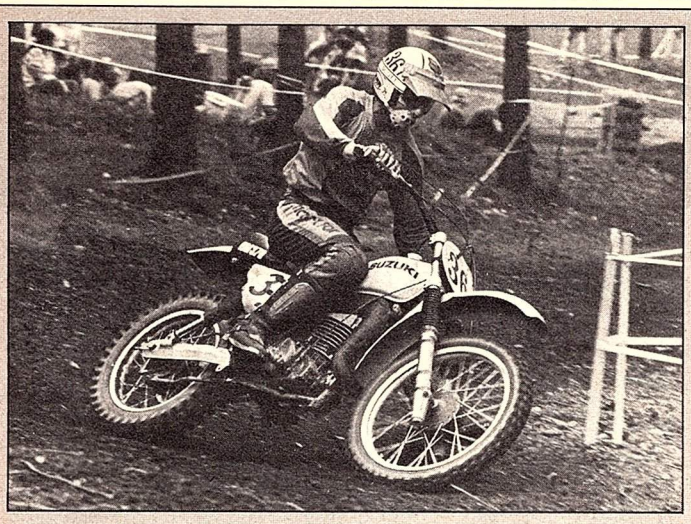
Southern California has been the breeding ground for some of the country's fastest riders, such as Marty Smith and Bob Hannah. With all the factories headquartered in California, SoCal 'crossers are closely scrutinized for that spark of new talent which could ignite into a future Hannah or Smith for the factory. Thus, Southern California pro races are hotly contested. Win in SoCal and some factory big-wig just might take notice.

Jim Gibson has been riding professionally for less than a year. A gymnast in high school, Jim readily applied his natural agility to motocross. John Bassett of Bassett Racing Products discovered Gibson riding minibikes in a field not more than 1000 yards from where he lives. He had heard Rich Eierstedt and Scott Gillman talking about this kid who was doing unreal things on a minibike. Bassett wanted to sponsor Gibson, so he started him out riding the junior class. Gibson rode it once, pronounced it too dangerous and moved up to intermediate. Jim won every race he entered and soon switched to the pro class. In a couple of months he was winning that class.

Bassett wanted young Jim to ride the Trans-AMA Support Series for him, but the Support class was full, so they entered Jim in the International class, which wasn't full, and he was accepted. Gibson had only ridden an open bike twice before the series started. For Jim, his first year of racing would see him riding against the top riders in the world, and to his credit he managed some top-ten moto placings. Jim feels that National-caliber racing is "like running with the top two guys at Saddleback, only they're 30 riders going faster longer. They all know how to start too, not just one or two guys that have got the start wired. It's really hard to get a good start against all those guys."

Gibson gets his bike through the support program from Yamaha, which limits the Nationals he can travel to, as Yamaha would rather not have their support riders racing against their factory teams. Jim hopes to ride as many Nationals as he can locally and attract the attention of the factory reps.

TOMORROW'S STARS



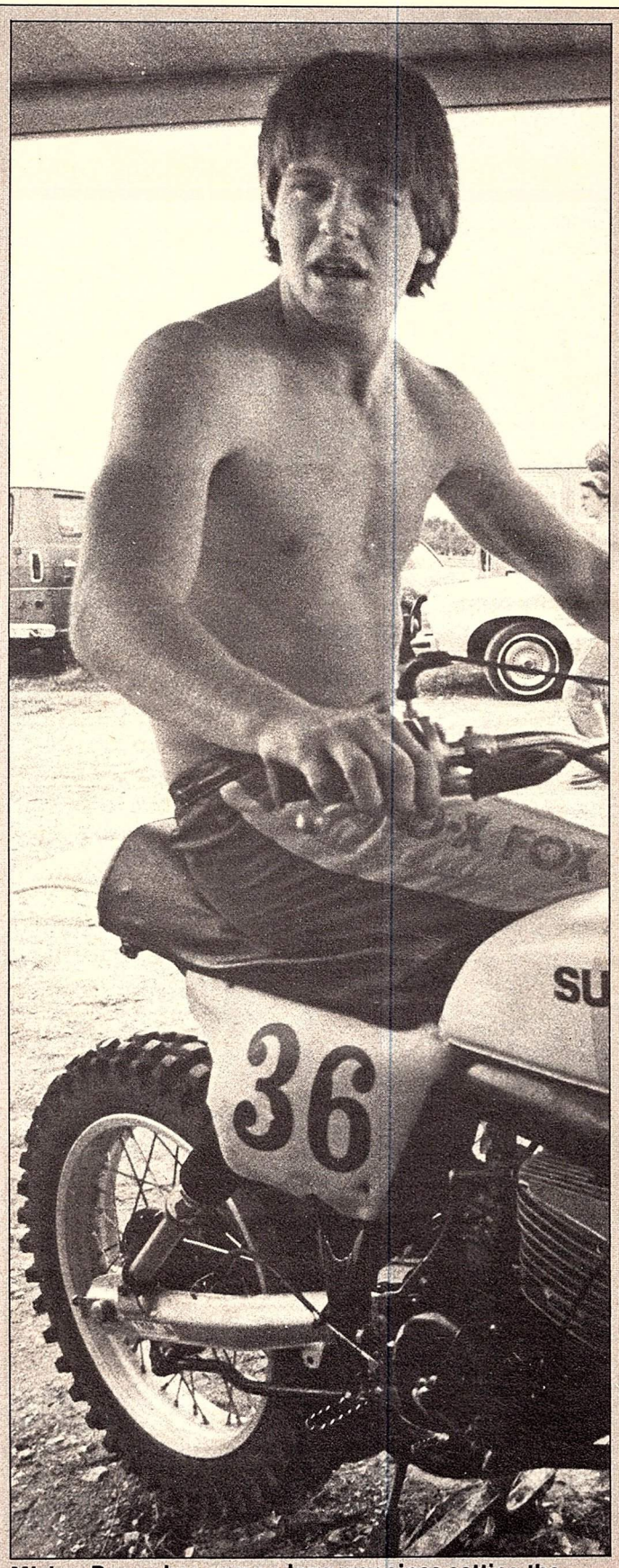
MICKEY BOONE — NORTH CAROLINA

By the conclusion of the 1977 motocross season Mickey Boone was probably the fastest privateer rider in America. It was a time when all the factory teams were hiring up new riders in wholesale quantities to cover themselves for the 1978 National circuit, since the AMA had decreed a new scheme where a rider could only enter one class. The factories wanted to cover their bets in all three classes: 125cc, 250cc and Open. But despite the demand for new riders, no one wanted to hire Mickey Boone. At least none of the big Japanese teams.

It was back in 1976 that privateer Mickey Boone, a local southern hotshoe from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, evoked the AMA's little-known claiming rule and tried to buy Bob Hannah's exotic multi-thousand-dollar water-cooled works 125cc Yamaha at a bargain price. A counter-bid and subsequent drawing out of the hat allowed Yamaha to keep its bike. In the weeks that followed on the 125cc National circuit the Japanese giants banded together against Mickey and his strong-willed father as they threatened to claim the works bikes of Suzuki and Honda as well. The factory riders showed up on old used bikes, and Honda's Marty Smith even rode an FMF-modified stocker one weekend to save their good bikes from possible claiming. The Japanese factory teams never forgot what Boone had caused them in the way of misery, turmoil and expenses.

But it was a year later during the 1977 racing season that Mickey Boone emerged as a rider of considerable talent, one who didn't need an exotic works bike to do well. His 250 and 370 RM Suzuki production bikes sponsored by S&M Cycles of Winston-Salem and Moto-X Fox were good enough. In the 500cc Nationals during the summer of 1977 it was the 20-year-old hillbilly who pulled the holeshot at many of the races and led most of the factory stellar talent to the checkered flag.

Still, the Japanese teams remembered back and none wanted to offer Mickey a ride. There was one company that did. Harley-Davidson, the unconventional convention that was nearly over its head in a sport dominated by high finance and technology, laid off their entire motocross race team from 1977 and signed Mickey Boone as their sole representative to campaign American motocross in 1978. Has Mickey Boone finally arrived?



Mickey Boone has come a long way since setting the world on fire at the 1974 125 World Cup.

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Fast. Faster.

These are the three fastest weapons in Suzuki's motocross arsenal.

The RM gang.

Two of them, RM-125 and RM-250, have made a shambles of their competition. And our new white-knuckler, RM-400, is primed to shut the door on open class stockers.

All three screamers are quick as the dickens. Nimble as cats. And all are tricked with more goodies than any bike this side of a works machine.

To wit:

Each is powered by the most respected stock mill going. Suzuki's race-bred Power Reed™ induction engine. (By improving the porting design, we gave the RM-250 and 400 an extra shot of oomph.)

This year, all three RMs are equipped with an aluminum box-type swing arm, two-stage dampening gas/oil shocks and leading-axle air forks. In other words, a suspension system that is as close to works as stock can get.

Other components common to these MXers include: A conical front hub. Full floating rear brake. Tucked-in pipe. And ding-proof plastic tank and fenders.

And just to make life more miserable for other small bore bikes, the RM-125 is outfitted with a 6-speed gearbox to better utilize the broad power band.

All things considered, you can bet your MX

And whiteknuckles.

boots that the competition will be keeping a close watch on the RM gang this year.

That is, if anybody can get close enough to watch.

RM-400

SUZUKI

The Fast One.

Ride safely: wear a helmet, eye protection and appropriate riding apparel.

TECHNICAL

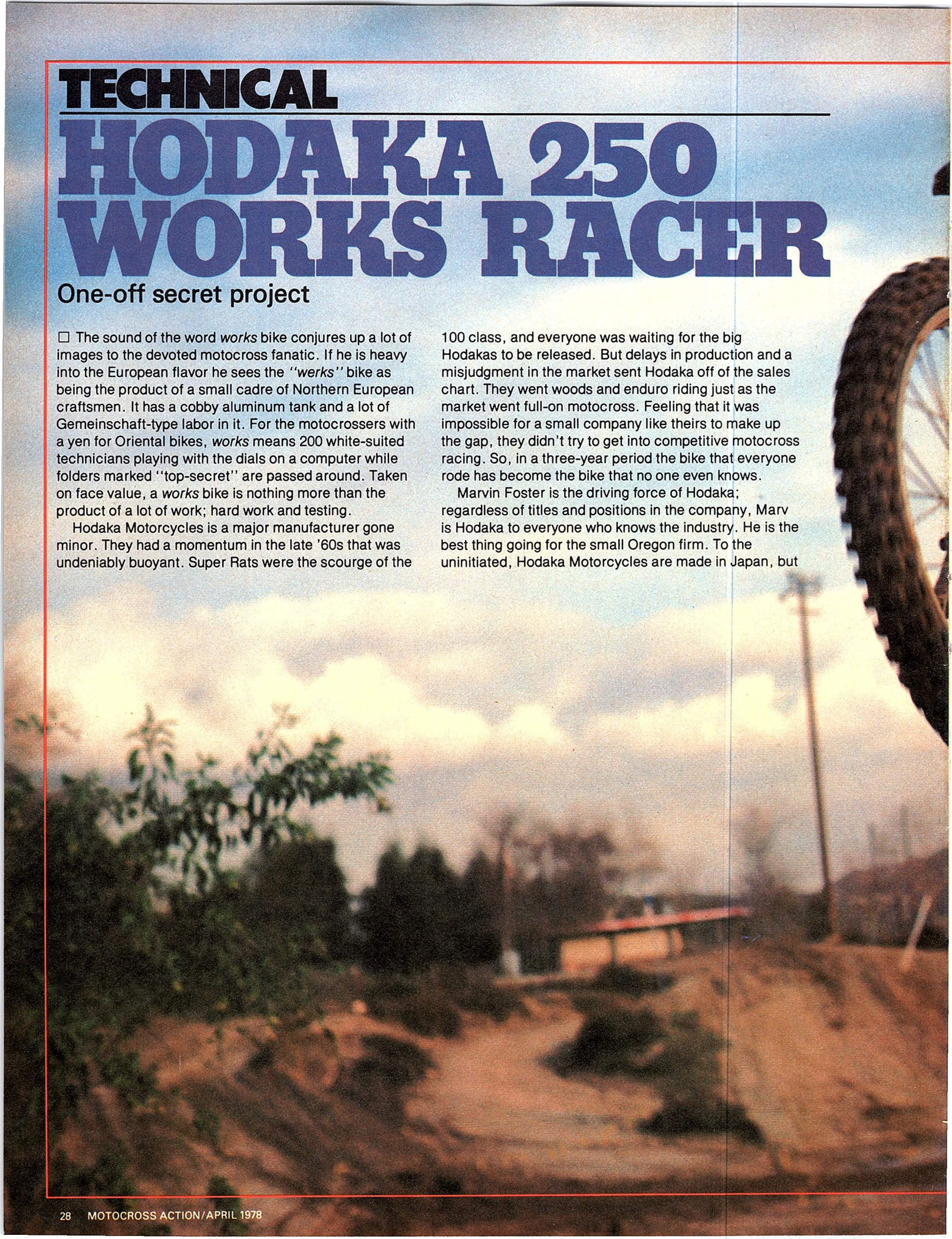
HODAKA 250 WORKS RACER

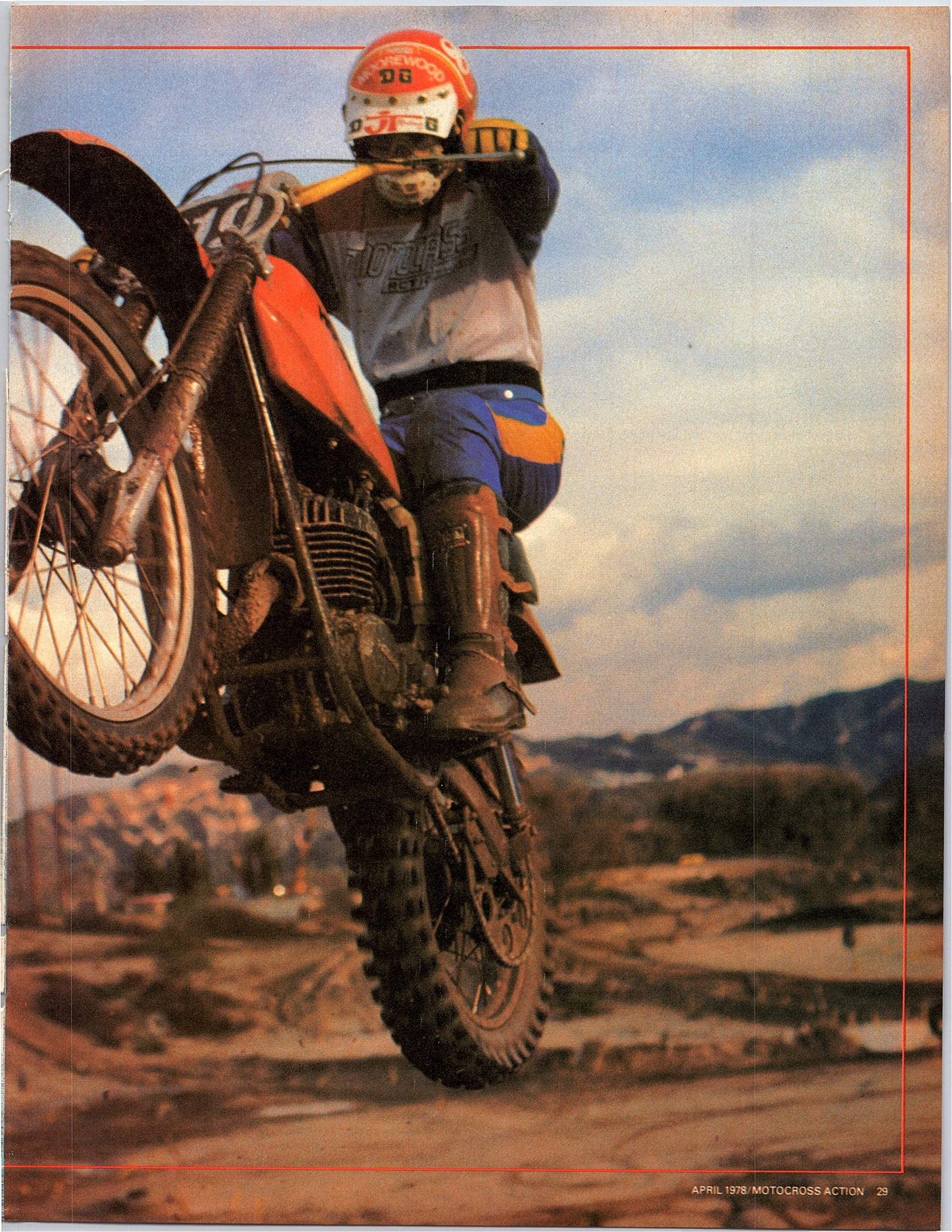
One-off secret project

☐ The sound of the word *works* bike conjures up a lot of images to the devoted motocross fanatic. If he is heavy into the European flavor he sees the *"werks"* bike as being the product of a small cadre of Northern European craftsmen. It has a cobby aluminum tank and a lot of Gemeinschaft-type labor in it. For the motocrossers with a yen for Oriental bikes, *works* means 200 white-suited technicians playing with the dials on a computer while folders marked "top-secret" are passed around. Taken on face value, a *works* bike is nothing more than the product of a lot of work; hard work and testing.

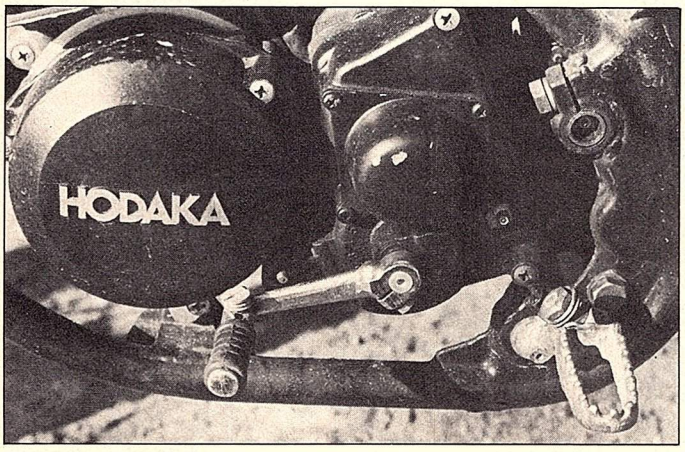
Hodaka Motorcycles is a major manufacturer gone minor. They had a momentum in the late '60s that was undeniably buoyant. Super Rats were the scourge of the 100 class, and everyone was waiting for the big Hodakas to be released. But delays in production and a misjudgment in the market sent Hodaka off of the sales chart. They went woods and enduro riding just as the market went full-on motocross. Feeling that it was impossible for a small company like theirs to make up the gap, they didn't try to get into competitive motocross racing. So, in a three-year period the bike that everyone rode has become the bike that no one even knows.

Marvin Foster is the driving force of Hodaka; regardless of titles and positions in the company, Marv is Hodaka to everyone who knows the industry. He is the best thing going for the small Oregon firm. To the uninitiated, Hodaka Motorcycles are made in Japan, but



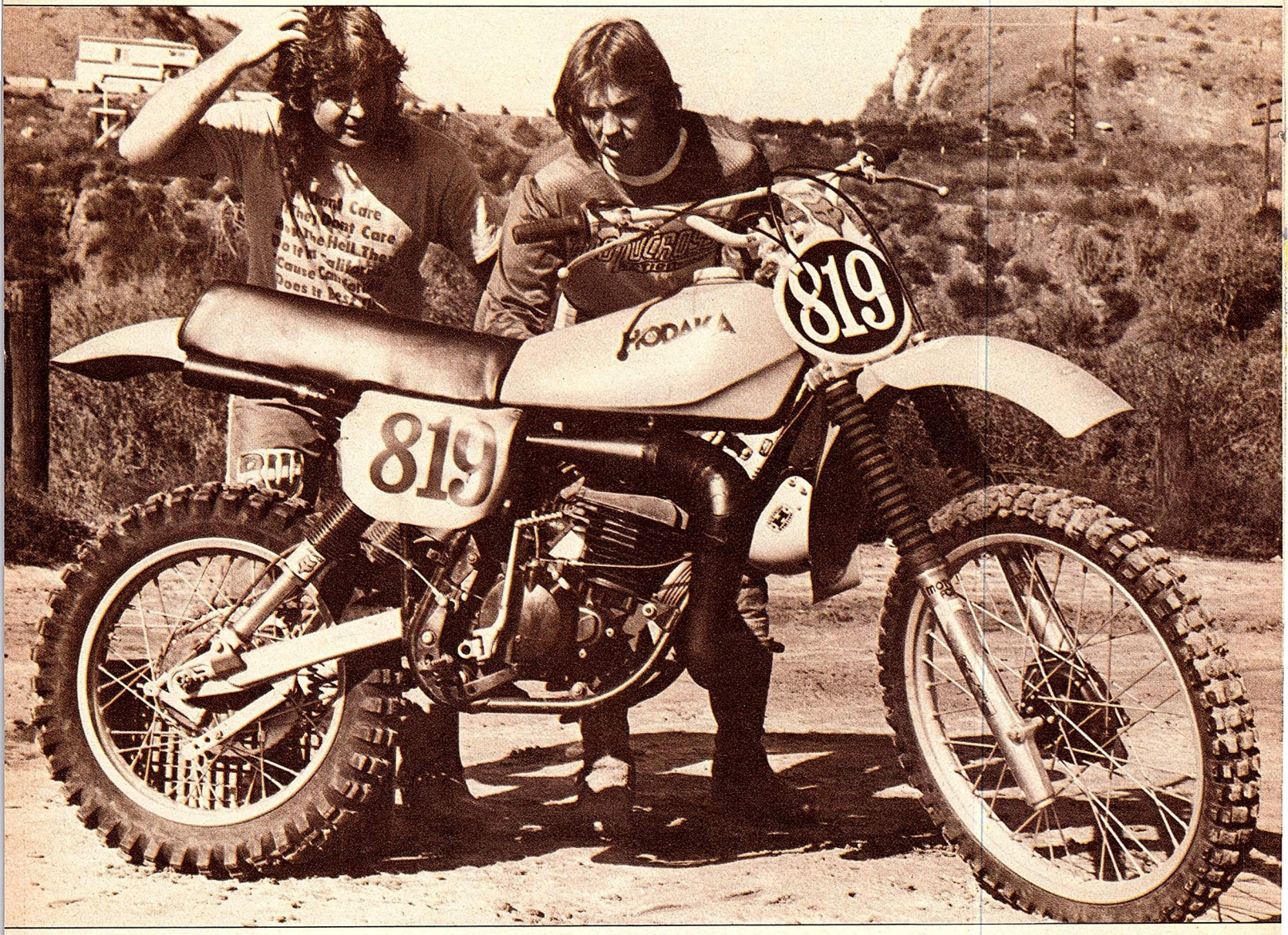


HODAKA 250 WORKS RACER



The shortest shift lever in captivity gives the goose to the five-speed gearbox.

The front and rear wheels were laced by DG Performance Specialties. The Hodaka 250 uses a 23-inch front wheel.



Once out from under wraps the Hodaka 250 works bike gathered in more than a few stares and quizzical looks.

they are the brainchild of a dedicated group of hard-core dirt riders in Oregon. But unfortunately, Oregon is great enduro and trail riding country, but not the hotbed of the motocross scene or industry.

The Hodaka 250 *works* racer is the product of Oregon dedication and Southern California know-how. First of all, there is only one bike in existence. It is not a prototype, but rather it is a product of determination. When the project was initiated the goals and demands on the machine were simple: The Hodaka works motocrosser must be based on the production 250 ED enduro bike, it must use readily available parts and when it is finished it must be competitive.

Southern California is a virtually untapped resource area for motorcycle manufacturing. Almost any part can be obtained, manufactured or designed within a 100-mile radius. Competitive and completely American-made motocrossers could be built in L.A. with no trouble at all by pulling together the right forces. Since Hodaka's desire to use a production-based motorcycle was their first priority, frames and engine casting were not a necessity, but they are well within the SoCal possibility range.

THE BEGINNINGS

The stock 250 ED Hodaka is not a motocross machine, and at first glance it doesn't seem possible that it ever could be. The engine was removed from the frame and the rolling chassis was rolled over to Grand Prix Specialties in North Hollywood. Grand Prix is a small, two-man motorcycle shop. Rick and Lauren are hard-working, innovative, and both are pro motocrossers. They know their jobs, which in this case were to bring the frame and suspension up to contemporary standards. The stock 250 ED suspension components are made by Kayaba, but they are not top-flight and the travel was limited to under 7½ inches. Grand Prix Specialties

The suspension on each end stands at 9½ inches. The Hodie can really fly.

HODAKA 250 WORKS RACER

jigged the frame up and took it almost completely apart. Kayaba's Western Regional Manager is Tet Miyamoto, and he was consulted on the suspension problems. Since the Hodaka enduro used Kayaba forks, the Kayaba specialists suggested mounting the newest leading axle air/spring forks with 9½ inches of travel. The forks were sent over, but when they were mounted to the Hodaka frame the rake stretched out to 32 degrees. That is too much. GPS had to cut the steering stem and pull the angle back two degrees. All excess brackets and metal were cut off the frame and the complete rear sub-frame was totally redesigned according to the blueprints.

There was no question about the rear shocks. Moto-X Fox was called up and supplied their superb Fox Airshox. The Airshox have become the standard of the racing world, and many factory teams use them. The Hodaka project elected to mount the best available to the back.

MEANWHILE BACK AT THE PORTS

While Grand Prix Specialties carefully modified the frame, the stock 250 engine was disassembled and jigsawed back together. The flywheel/CDI was discarded and a special internal rotor ignition was hooked up. The outer cases had to be machined for a narrower profile. The transmission was carefully checked and the bottom end was declared race-ready.

The cylinder was taken to Ted Moorewood of Cycle Town in Norwalk, California. The gear ratios, port timing and combustion chamber were checked. Then the engine was completely ported and turned into a special one-off reed-valved cylinder. The engine and pipe work required many man hours of work. Yet, the bike was designed to be a strong mid-range to top-end bike, certainly not a pipey road racer.

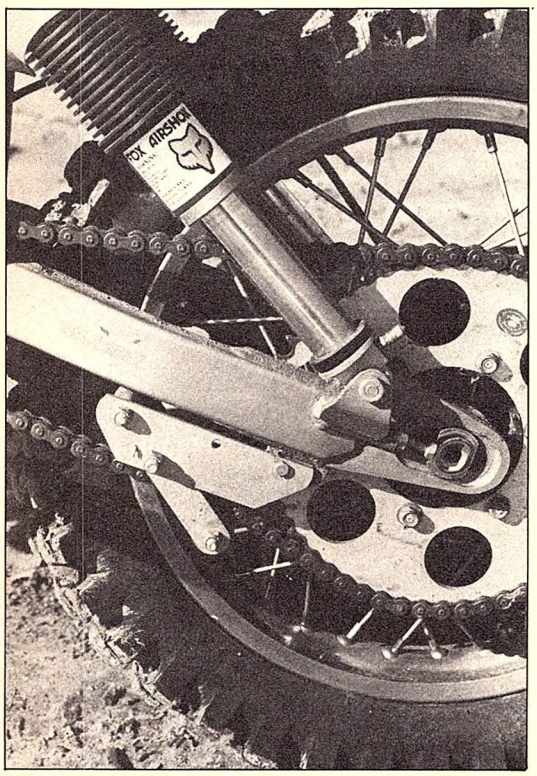
AT THE OTHER END

Trying to build the bike under deadline pressure meant that when parts were readily available from established companies, they were used. One company building high-quality parts is DG Performance Specialties. The rear wheel was sent to DG to get their special nine-gauge gold-

(*continued on page 66*)

Hodaka won't sell this bike because they don't plan on making any. This is the only one.

The engine breathes through a 36mm Mikuni and a one-off Yamaha reed valve. The bulk on the case is the shifting mechanism.



A DG aluminum swingarm connects to a set of Fox Airshox. The shocks are the best that money can buy.

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☐ 25% deposit — will pay balance, plus freight C.O.D.
Charge to: ☐ BankAmericard ☐ Master Charge
☐ Please send me your FREE catalog.

Account No. _____ Exp. date _____
Bike: year, make, model _____
Name _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip _____
Your phone no. (day time) ( ) _____

Over The Hill A

America's youngest factory riders

By Jody Weisel

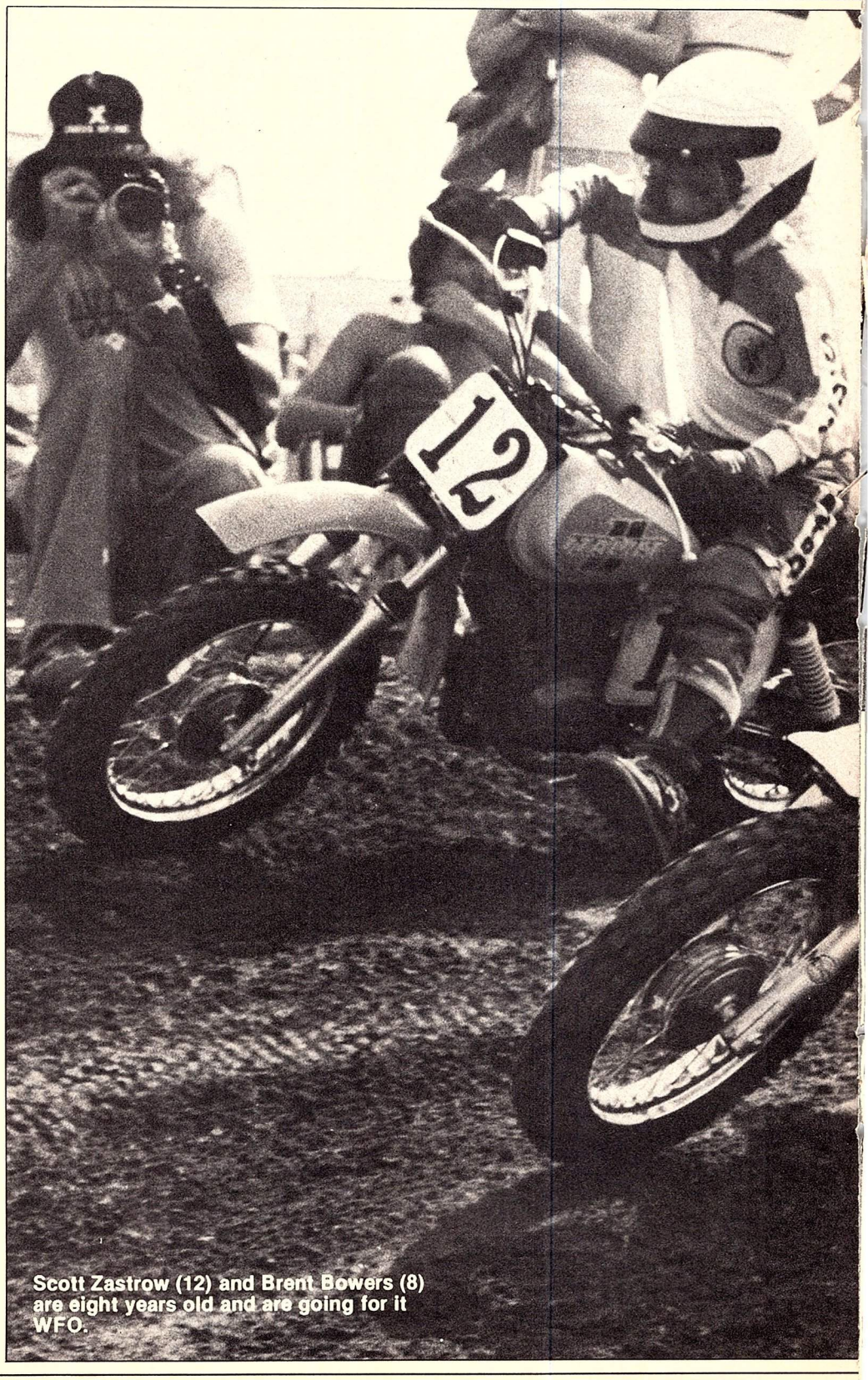
☐ In Michael Koemans' living room sit a number of unusual trophies. Michael is a retired motorcycle racer, and when he hung up his helmet and boots he was at the top of his sport. Michael Koemans was untouchable and in racing circles was somewhat of an idol, but Michael gave it all up. After capturing three World Championships and three National Championships, the pressures of traveling the circuit, guiding his machine through the pack and on to another victory became too boring. So three-time World Champion Michael Koemans quit and took up other interests. He retired so that he could go to the first grade.

Koemans is now ten years old and cannot be coaxed out of retirement. He is busy playing soccer, riding his skateboard and wouldn't be interested in remounting his fully sponsored 50cc Italjet Mini-Mini.

Michael Koemans never reached the big-time; although sponsored by Cycle Town in Norwalk, California, he was never approached for a fully sponsored factory ride. He was probably too young. You have to be at least eight to join that elite group.

The youngest factory-sponsored riders in the world are Timmy Tomaselli, Kurtie Henricksen and Paul Denis. They are ten years old. Racing is not a man's game, but rather a game played by men of all ages. The Italjet factory team has totally dominated the Junior Cycle class. Junior Cycles are 50cc motorcycles limited to riders between the ages of six and 11. Rather they are limited to the parents of riders between the ages of six and 11. A stock 50cc motorcycle sells in America for less than $550. The *factory* Italjet bikes could be duplicated for $1500.

Imagine if you will what a factory ride is like for a ten-year-old. Their



Scott Zastrow (12) and Brent Bowers (8) are eight years old and are going for it WFO.

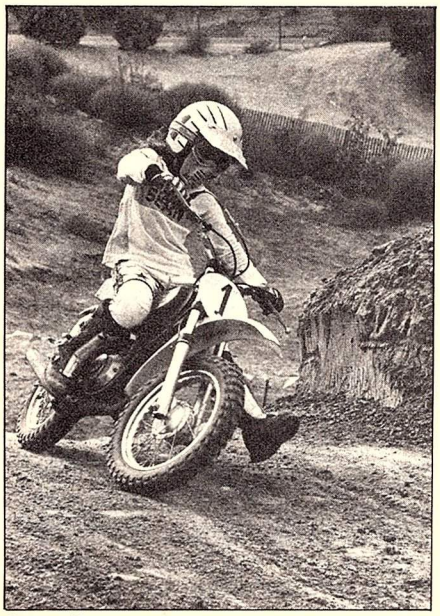
t Twelve

Freckle-faced Timmy Tomaselli has a fully sponsored factory ride at the age of 11.

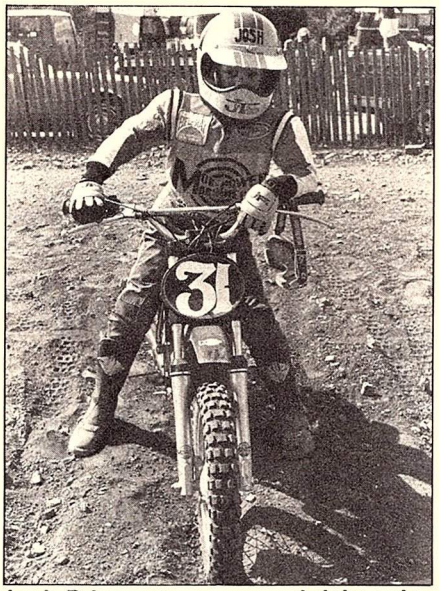
Team Italjet rider Paul Denis holds four World Junior Cycle Championships and two National titles. Paul retired once at the age of nine.

Kurtie Henricksen dresses like a billboard, but that is what a sponsored ride is like at age ten.

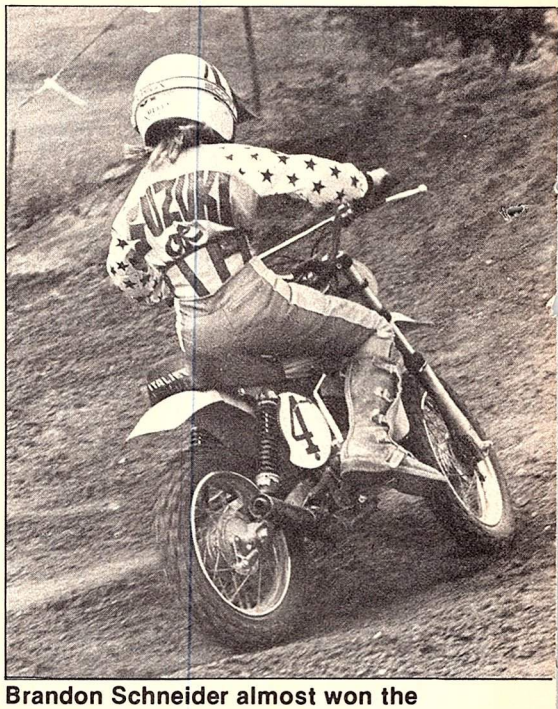
Over The Hill At Twelve



Sean Frampton gets about as aggressive as an eight-year-old can at Saddleback.



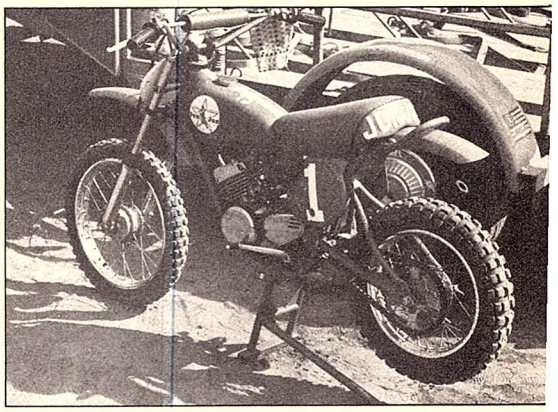
Josh Price acts suave and debonair before the start of his moto. At nine years old Josh has only been racing one year.



Brandon Schneider almost won the National Championship for six to eight-year-olds, but threw a chain on the last lap. If he was taller his shirt would say Suzuki of Pomona.

Rick Hemme roosts his knee-high 50 around a Saddleback uphill turn.

Michael Knapp has been racing for several years. He is a veteran at the age of ten.



Jon-Jon Belisle has achieved fame and two titles on this monoshock MR50 Honda.

bikes are prepared with tender loving care by one of the best minicycle tuners in America. Neither Tomaselli, Henricksen or Denis are allowed to touch their bikes except to race them. Between races, Tuner Ted Moorewood takes the bikes, two for each rider, back to his complete machine and tuning shop, and rebuilds them. Each piece is carefully machined, manufactured and detailed out. The average Italjet X50R mini gets four inches of travel, but the factory-modified bikes get more than six inches. The average Italjet turns out about six horsepower, but the modified factory Italjets churn out ten horsepower. The average Italjet Junior Cycle can expect to break down once or twice during the NMA National Championship, but the factory Italjets seldom break.

A ten-year-old factory rider doesn't get a salary, but he also doesn't have any bills. He shows up at the race, via mom and dad's custom van or motor home, puts on his factory racing suit, demolishes the opposition and tries to get home before his 9 p.m. bedtime.

Timmy Tomaselli, ten, is the star of the team. A small, freckle-faced kid with an absolute disregard for his personal safety. He goes all-out. Tomaselli wants to win, but more than that he wants to go fast. If he is 200 yards ahead Timmy is still on the ragged edge. Remember that these 50s are turning out the kind of horsepower that 125s gave us six years ago.

Paul Denis, ten, is the second man on the Italjet factory team. At one time he was number one in priority, but at the age of nine he quit racing. Told his father he didn't want to do it anymore and that was it. One year later he decided to make a comeback. It was quite a comeback. At the Houston Nationals in a pouring rainstorm he won both the Junior Cycle Stock Championship and the Junior Cycle Modified Championship, and he won both classes on his dead-stock X50R. Italjet was so pleased with his performance that they gave him the bike of his choice to play with. Paul, perhaps the best all-around Junior Cycle rider, is a little more practical and he wanted the money instead. Paul Denis has won almost every National and World title available for Junior Cycles.

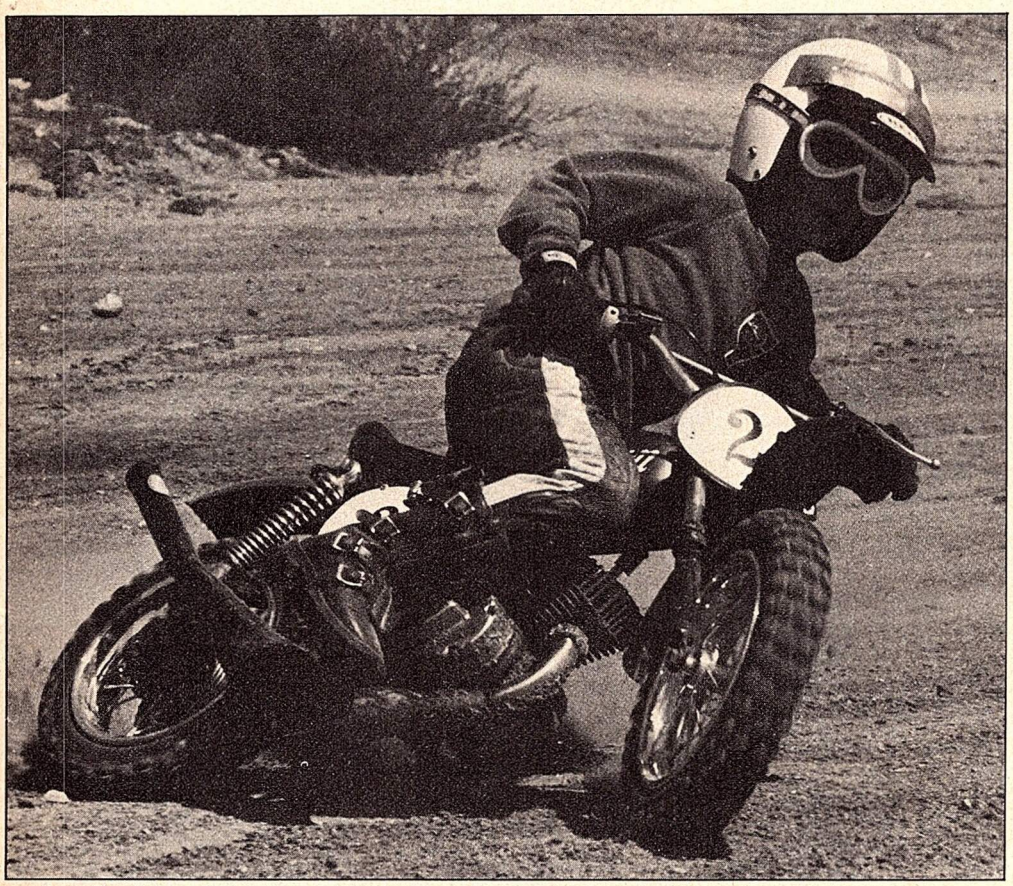
Kurtie Henricksen, ten, the youngest of the three, rounds out the Italjet team. Kurtie's father is the director of the National Minicycle Association, so Kurtie has been racing from Mini-Mini on up to the Junior Cycles. Henricksen, like the rest of the team, worries about his future and has started to race the full-size 80cc minicycles. He is proving to be quite a threat on the larger bikes with several wins under his belt to date.

There is a lot of talk about parents pushing their kids too hard and too fast, and in many cases it is true, but for the youngest factory racers in America there is not a lot of pressure. The parents of Tomaselli, Denis and Henricksen leave the kids alone, but they don't hesitate to tell everyone else how good their kids are. But that is only human.

These are the small motocrossers, perhaps the wave of the future or maybe just burned-out hulks by 13, but that is not important. What really counts is that they are having fun and enjoying themselves. Their equipment is top-rate, thanks to a watchful Italjet factory. Their machines are normally well-prepared and there is a young crop of fast eight-year-olds hot on their tails.

Suzuki has decided to enter into the Junior Cycle field with their new RM50, and it will only serve to increase interest in full-bore all-out racing. Italjet totally defeated Honda's entry into Junior Cycle racing three years ago and forced them to abandon their program, but Suzuki's effort is much more serious. Junior Cycle racing is not the wave of the future, yet it is a sign of the health of the sport. Up-and-coming riders like Mike Healey, Brandon Schneider, Josh Price, Michael Knapp, Brent Bowers, Rick Hemme, Scott Zastrow and Sean Frampton can only hope to improve the development and foundations of the sport.

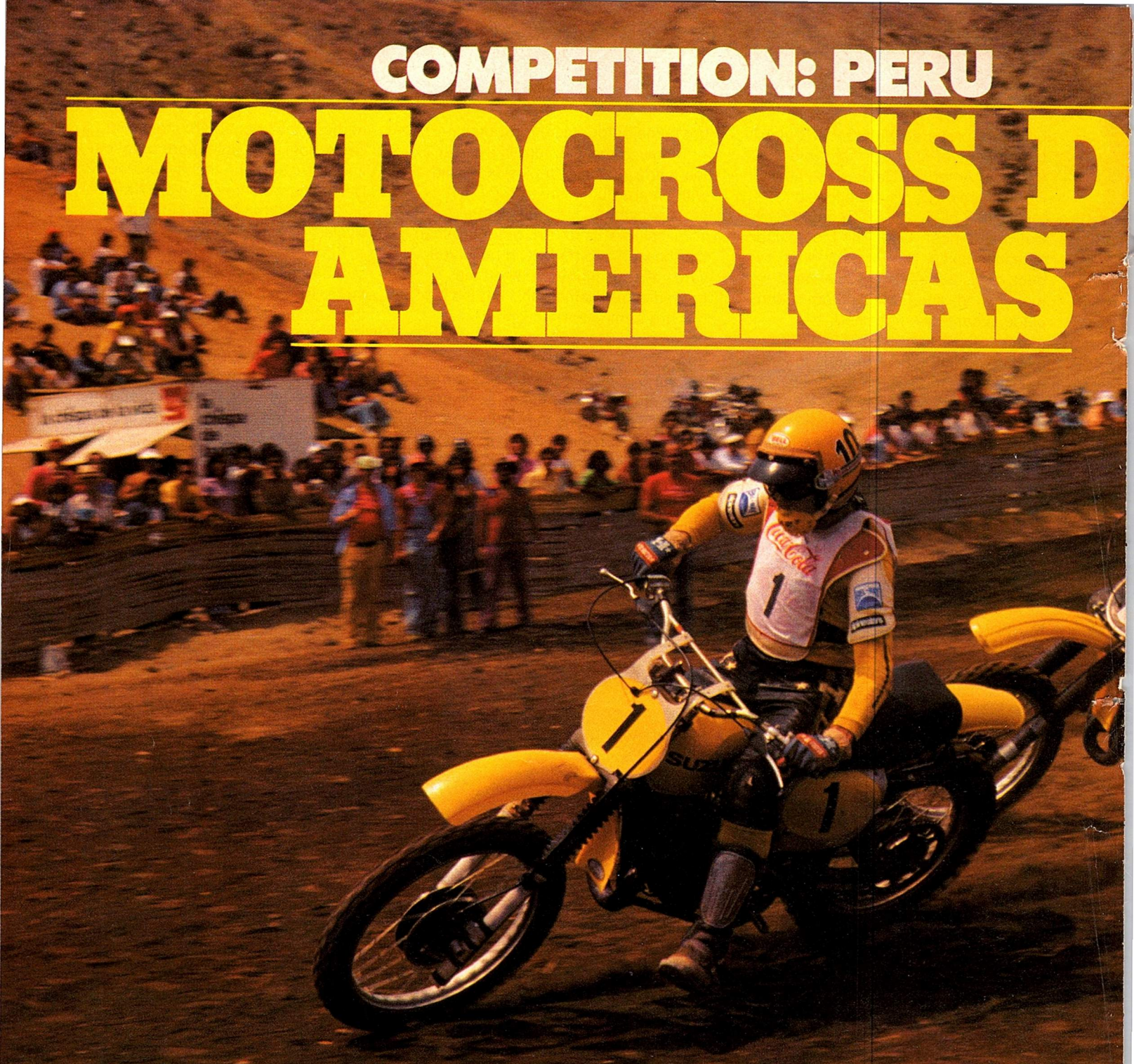
For the youngest factory riders in America life is a bed of roses, unless Michael Koemans comes out of retirement.



Back in 1973 Michael Koemans was five years old and cookin'. Full-lock, feet-up slides were nothing to him. A future World Champion? No, Michael retired at age six.

COMPETITION: PERU

MOTOCROSS D AMERICAS



DeCoster dominates Latin America's premier motocross

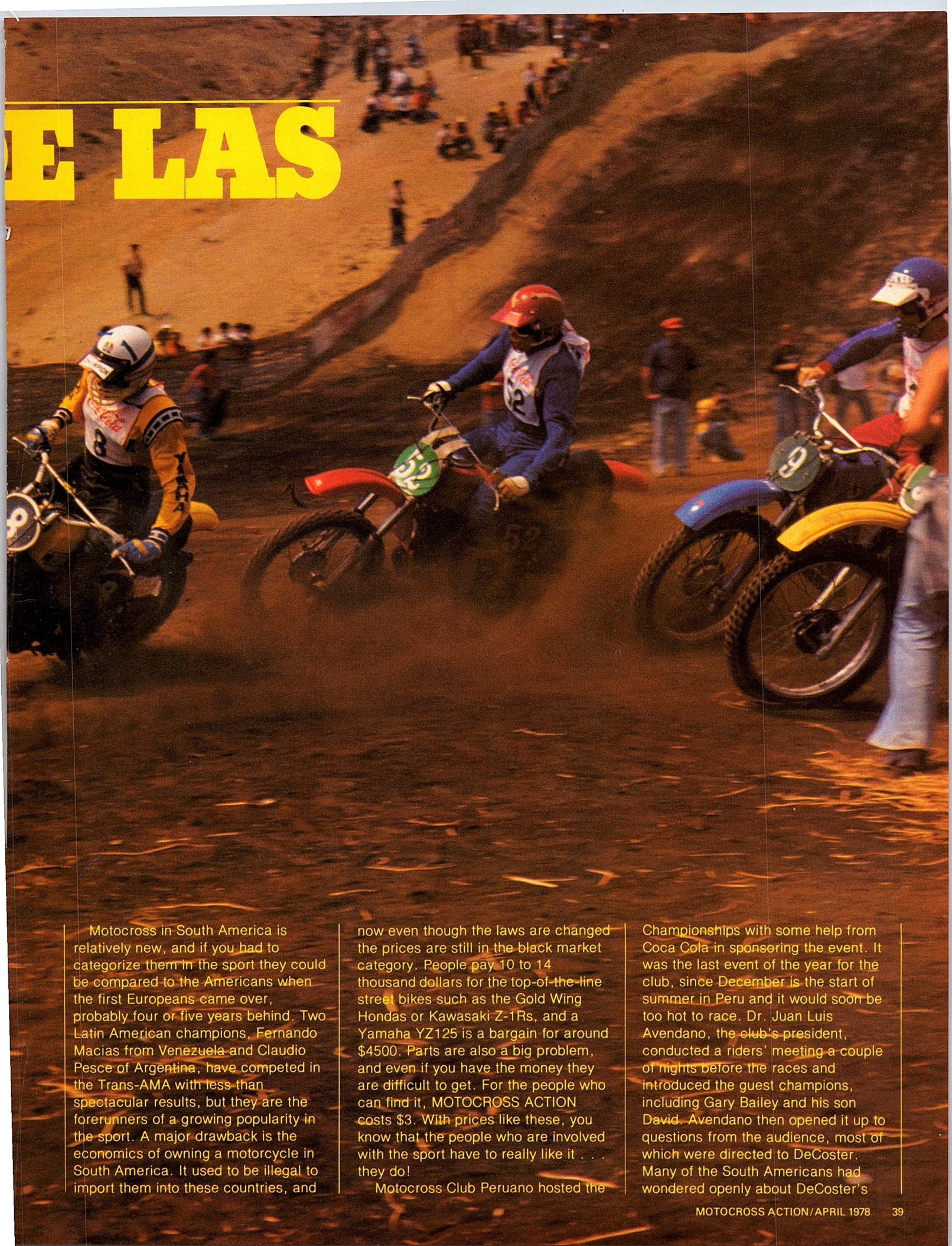
By Dick Miller

☐ A new dimension was added to the third annual Motocross of the Americas held in Lima, Peru, when five-time World Champion Roger DeCoster was invited to compete against South America's premier motocrossers which included champions from six countries. DeCoster's predictable domination of the two-day event and four motos of serious motocross was spectacular and was viewed by thousands on national TV.

Aeroperu executive and motocross aficionado Bobby Booth had invited DeCoster to Ecuador the previous year to watch the races in hopes he might come back and display his skills. DeCoster was so overwhelmed by the hospitality and friendliness of the people he met during that trip that he rearranged his factory testing plans and flew to Lima the week after wrapping up the Trans-AMA title.

The Manchay circuit on the outskirts of Lima is comparable to Carlsbad in difficulty, and in fact you would think you were in California were it not for all the banners printed in Spanish. But even Carlsbad has trees and bushes — Manchay does not. There is virtually no rainfall in Lima even though it is situated on the Pacific coast of Peru at the base of the Andes, some of the world's tallest mountains. There is no shortage of water due to the runoff from the mountains; however, areas without irrigation such as Manchay are desolate and dry. To prevent dust, diesel oil is worked into the track, and seemed to solve the problem during the two-day event.

E LAS



Motocross in South America is relatively new, and if you had to categorize them in the sport they could be compared to the Americans when the first Europeans came over, probably four or five years behind. Two Latin American champions, Fernando Macias from Venezuela and Claudio Pesce of Argentina, have competed in the Trans-AMA with less than spectacular results, but they are the forerunners of a growing popularity in the sport. A major drawback is the economics of owning a motorcycle in South America. It used to be illegal to import them into these countries, and now even though the laws are changed the prices are still in the black market category. People pay 10 to 14 thousand dollars for the top-of-the-line street bikes such as the Gold Wing Hondas or Kawasaki Z-1Rs, and a Yamaha YZ125 is a bargain for around $4500. Parts are also a big problem, and even if you have the money they are difficult to get. For the people who can find it, MOTOCROSS ACTION costs $3. With prices like these, you know that the people who are involved with the sport have to really like it . . . they do!

Motocross Club Peruano hosted the Championships with some help from Coca Cola in sponsoring the event. It was the last event of the year for the club, since December is the start of summer in Peru and it would soon be too hot to race. Dr. Juan Luis Avendano, the club's president, conducted a riders' meeting a couple of nights before the races and introduced the guest champions, including Gary Bailey and his son David. Avendano then opened it up to questions from the audience, most of which were directed to DeCoster. Many of the South Americans had wondered openly about DeCoster's

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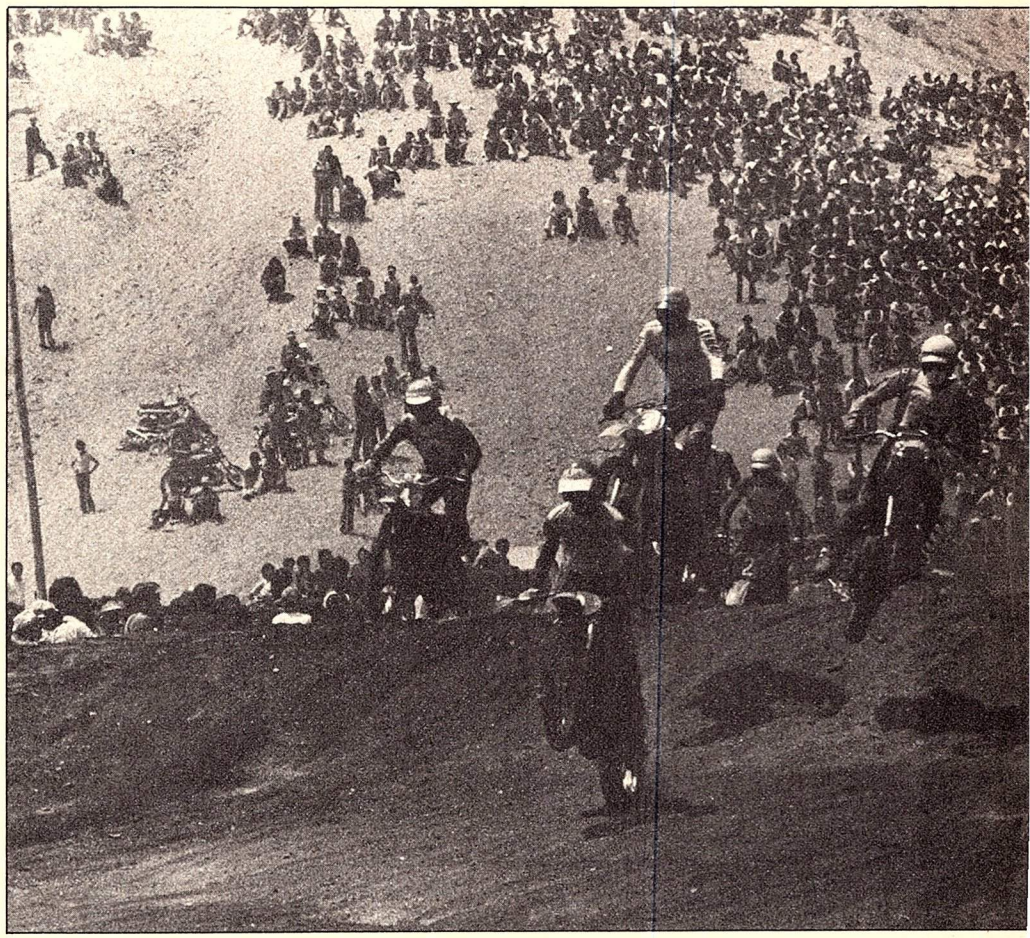
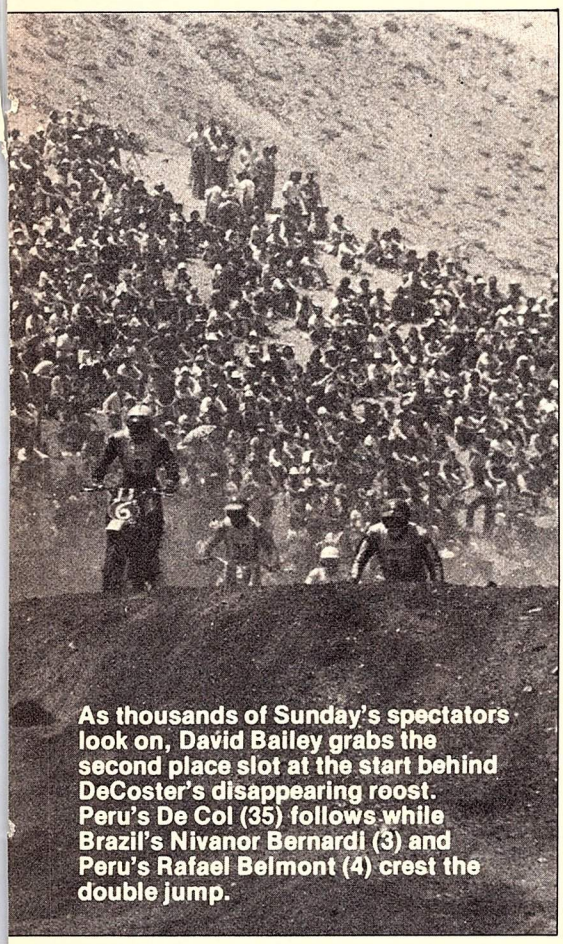
seriousness in competing, and when the question was finally asked by a youngster in the group, Roger replied, "I always race to win when I compete." Inviting DeCoster to your country to race is comparable to inviting Farrah Fawcett to compete in a local beauty pageant . . . not much chance for the locals. Even so, he lent importance to the event and every one of his competitors were pumped to be on the same course with him — though most conceded the race to him long before it started.

Manchay is a Quechua Indian word meaning place of fear; however, the 125cc Support racers either didn't know the meaning or were fearless. At the completion of the first lap of their first moto many tried to clear a double jump at the end of a long downhill straightaway, with only a few making it. The restrictions of their class allowed no MX-type bikes and all had to be standard production street 125s, with the only modifications allowed being tires and suspension. A minimum of 40 mph was needed to clear the double jump, and riding a street bike made it even more scary. The purpose of the restrictions was to allow more Peruvian kids to be able to compete, and the winner of the two days of racing would receive a new DT100 Yamaha. It turned out to be some of the best racing of the event.

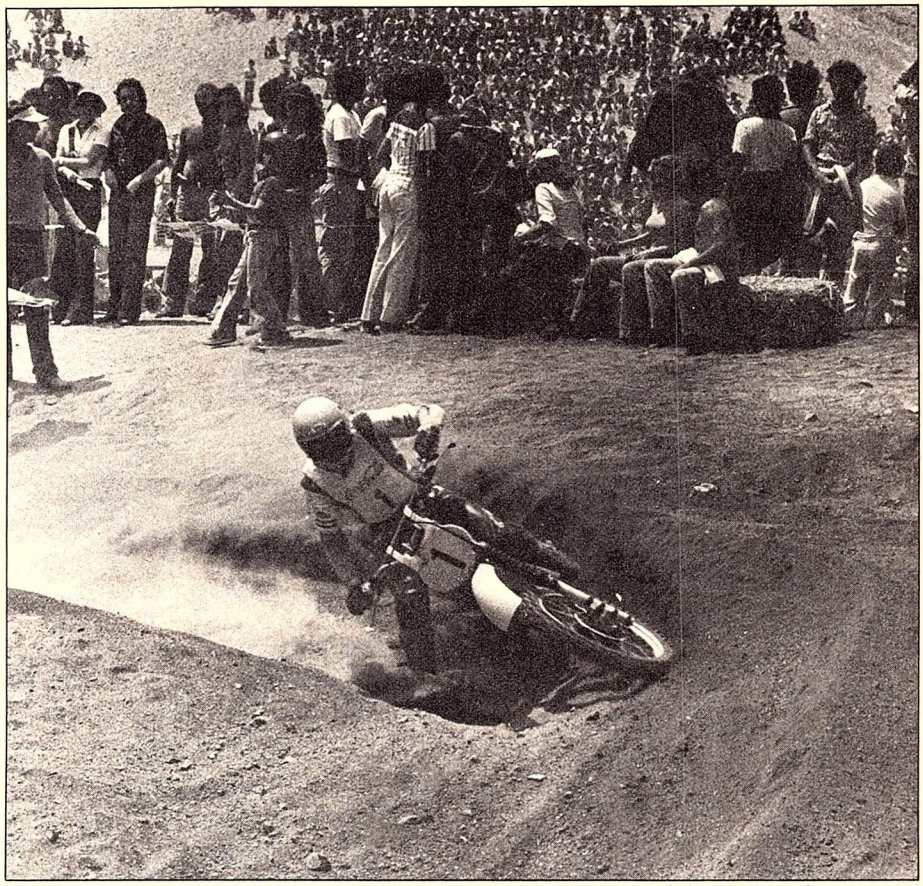
The 250cc machines used in the championship motos were mainly Yamahas and Maicos, with several KTMs thrown in for good measure. David Bailey used a Bultaco his dad built from spare parts he brought with him to rejuvenate a loaned bike from a Peruano MX club member. Brazil's champion, Nivanor Bernardi, is a factory rider for Yamaha and had just returned from testing the new works bikes in Japan. Yamaha has an assembly plant in Peru and seems to be the most popular marque in Latin America because of availability. Of the few Suzukis that were entered, one was an RM125B ridden quite well against the 250s by Remo Boeck, a Peruvian. Most of the equipment is on a par with what is being raced in the U.S., with various "trick" items such as Fox Airshox in evidence. DeCoster brought Jeff Jennings' factory bike,



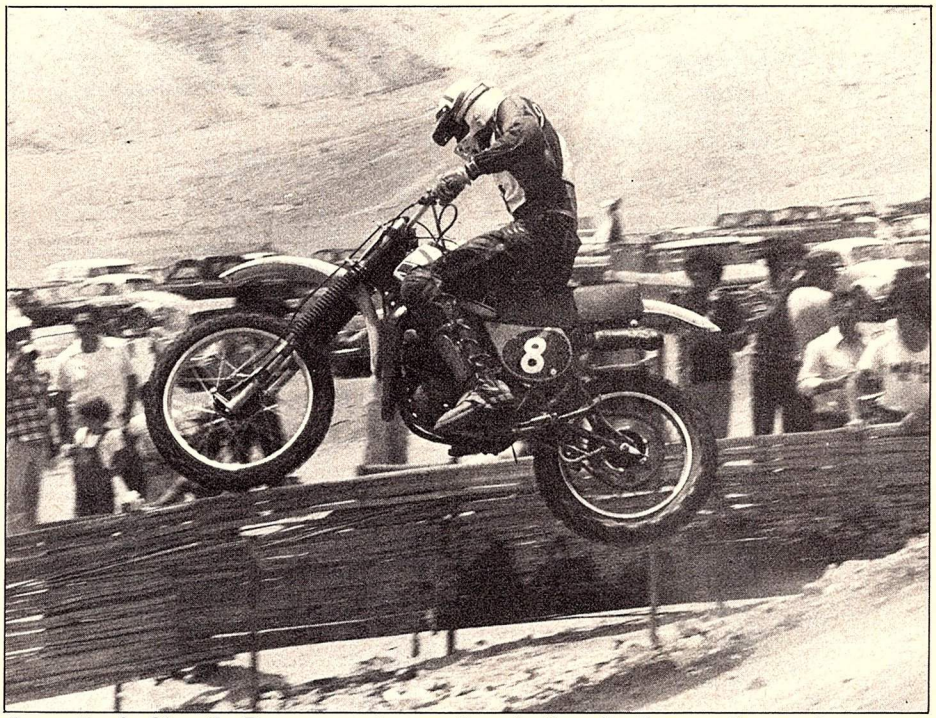
First aid was an Army exercise, but the only business was the result of the 125cc "standard" event in which the competitors raced street-type bikes. I wonder why Mike Goodwin never thought of that?



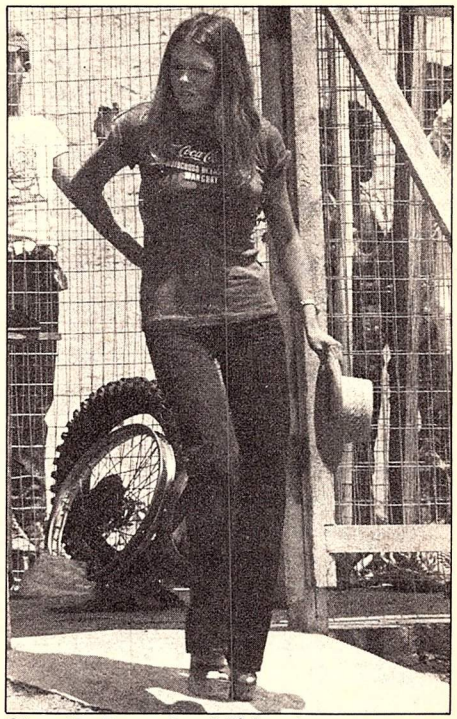
As thousands of Sunday's spectators look on, David Bailey grabs the second place slot at the start behind DeCoster's disappearing roost. Peru's De Col (35) follows while Brazil's Nivanor Bernardi (3) and Peru's Rafael Belmont (4) crest the double jump.



The Manchay course is hard, dry and difficult. DeCoster felt the terrain was comparable to California.



Argentina's Claudio Pesce spent more time in the pits than on the track, probably due to all the attention his girlfriend was getting while he was racing.



Claudio Pesce's girlfriend . . .

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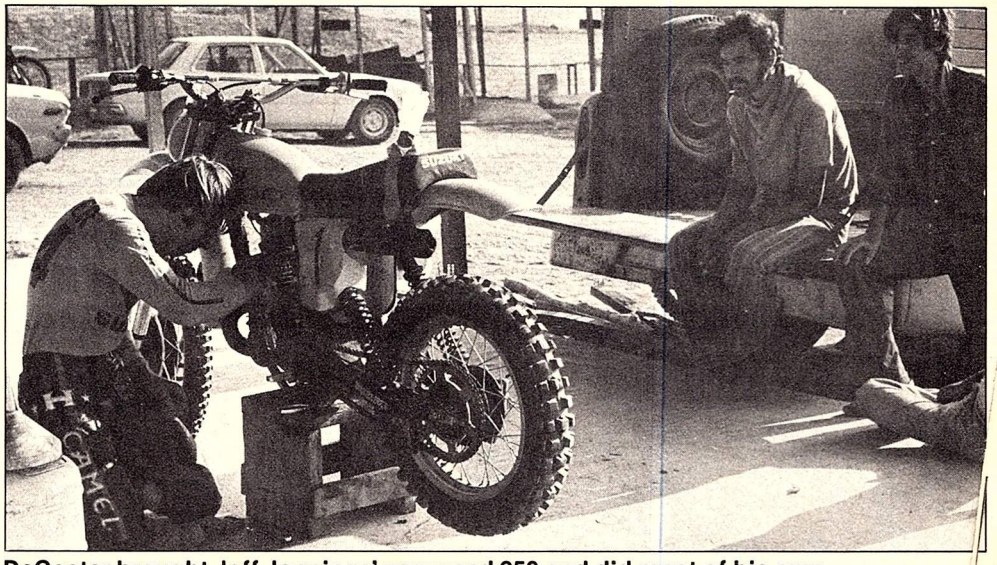
since he didn't have a 250cc machine in the States and doesn't usually ride the class. A few top South American riders were absent due to injuries, and former Peruvian champion Guy Booth was unable to get away from his new job in California.

Of the four 25-minute plus two lap motos, DeCoster led all from start to finish with only Peruvian youngster Giacomo De Col and Gary Bailey's 16-year-old son David making short-lived challenges in the starts. DeCoster dazzled everyone, and in his usual style of making it look easy. "Professor" Bailey shook his head as he watched DeCoster and commented on how he's continually amazed by "the Man." So complete was DeCoster's dominance that few spectators realized that in the last moto of the event he rode the final 20 minutes with a rear flat, even increasing his lead. Of all the Latin American competitors, Peruvian champion Ivan Bulos showed the most potential. His speed and consistency gave him the runner-up spot to DeCoster after the two days of racing, and with more experience he should improve.

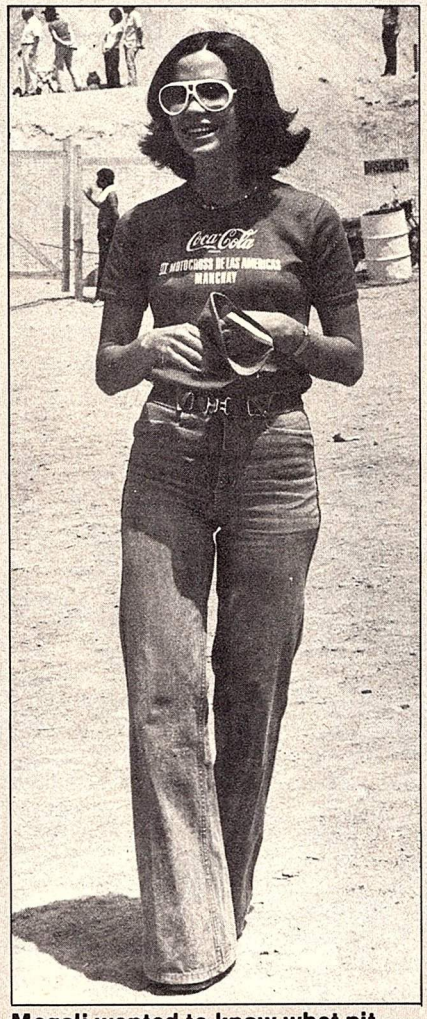
What the Peruvians lacked in experience they more than made up for in their desire and effort to host a proper event. Their organization of the two days of racing would put to shame many American and European promotions. One interesting innovation was the use of flagmen to show that the track was *clear* on blind jumps. Another was the *distribution* of each moto's results for all the competitors less than 20 minutes after the race.

Peru is a motorcycle rider's paradise, with very few restrictions on the sport. There is a place south of Lima along the coast called Paracas where you can ride for weeks without seeing anyone, or if you're so inclined you can ride over the Andes into the Amazon jungle. It's against the law to ride double in the city of Lima because some thieves once made use of motorcycles as getaway vehicles and the police figured the law would put a stop to the practice.

Another interesting fact is that Peru grows 60 percent of the cocaine used in the world. DeCoster learned this the

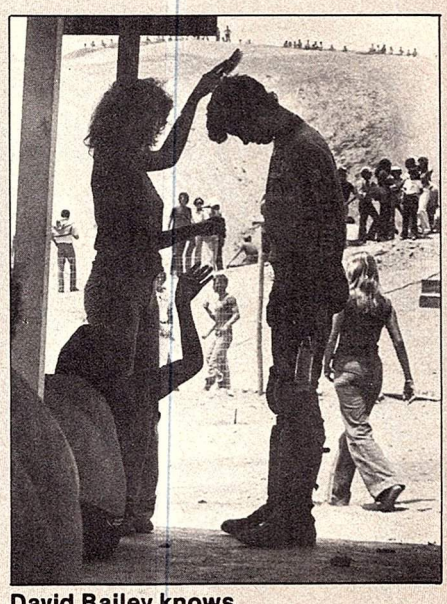


DeCoster brought Jeff Jennings' very used 250 and did most of his own wrenching. After practice 3M was needed to seal a case leak.

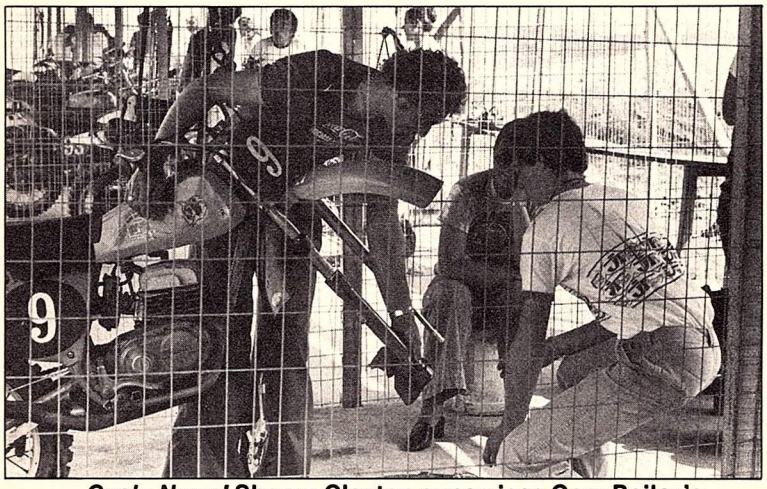


Megali wanted to know what pit tootsie means.

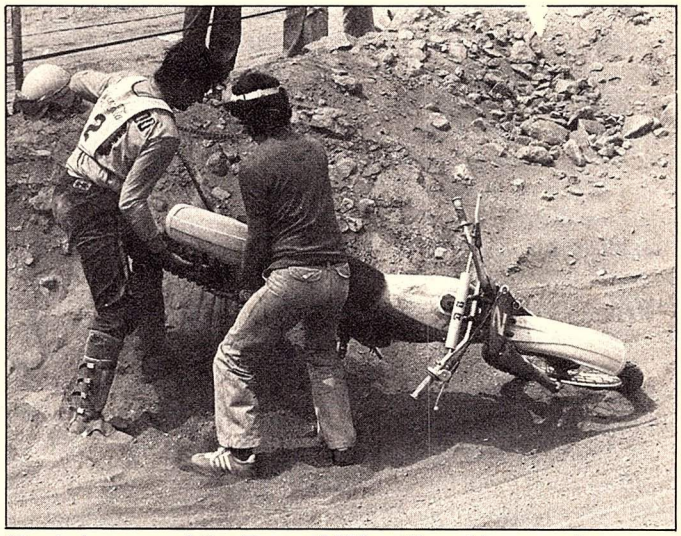
So did her girlfriend Astrid . . .



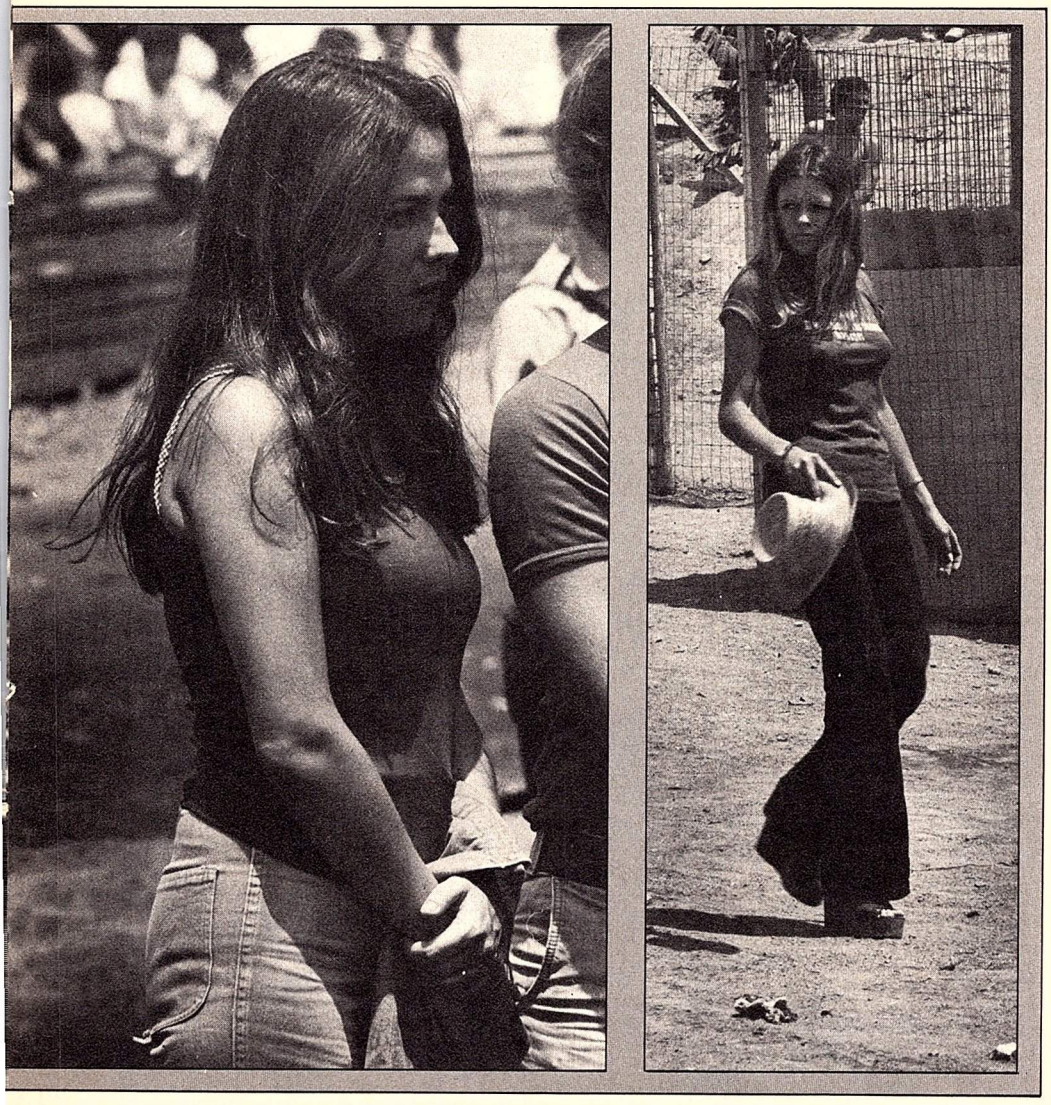
David Bailey knows . . .

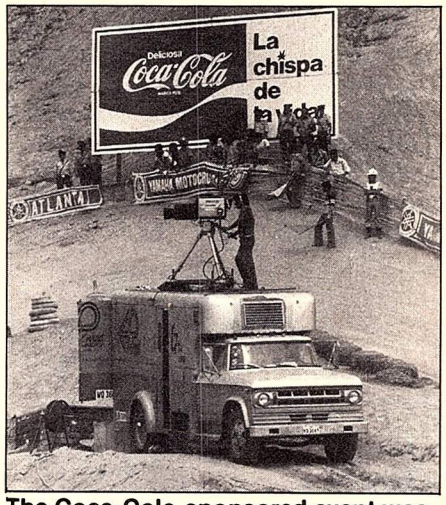


Cycle News' Sharon Clayton supervises Gary Bailey's reconstruction of a Peruvian Bultaco for his son David to race. Gary brought most of the spares with him and even reed-ported the cylinder with a drill and hand file. His previous MX schools in Peru have made him many friends.

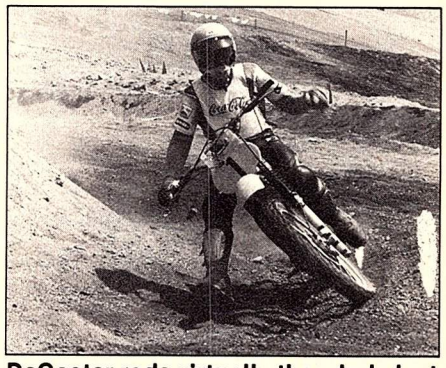


Macia has raced the Trans-AMA with not too much success, but is a popular and friendly competitor even when his Yamaha is snapping chains.





The Coca-Cola-sponsored event was televised nationally. Although there are color sets in Peru, all programs are broadcast in black and white.



DeCoster rode virtually the whole last moto of the four-race event with a rear flat and still picked up five seconds a lap on his nearest competitor. He was impressive!

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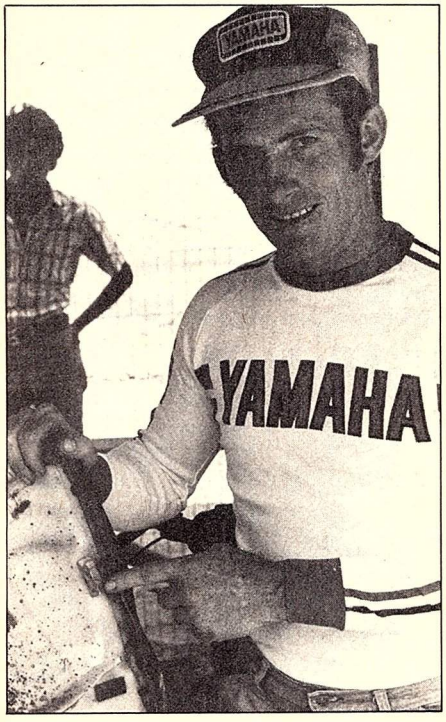
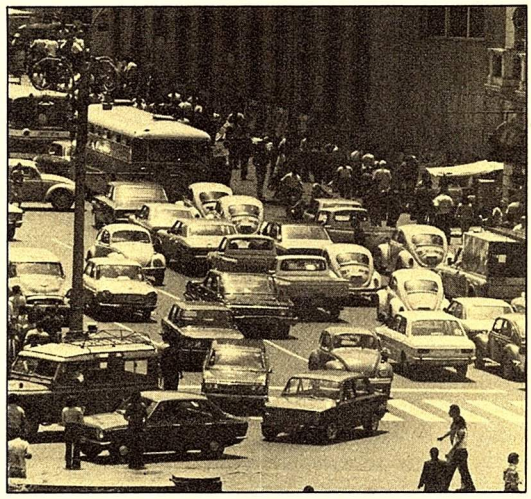
hard way when he tried to get his bike through U.S. Customs after flying back to Los Angeles. He was on a tight schedule and after the last moto of Sunday's race he crated up the bike and sent it to the Lima airport. After the trophy presentation he caught the Aeroperu flight (nine hours) and only had an hour's stopover at LAX before he had to board an 11-hour flight to Japan in order to test next year's GP bike. He had to get the Suzuki released from customs so U.S. Suzuki could pick it up, but the customs agent wanted Roger to take the tires off the bike. Roger said he didn't have any tools and less time. Since it was a standoff and Roger was running out of time, he told the agent to cut the tires off. Roger said the agent used a pocket knife and was soaking wet by the time he cut them off, almost cutting off his finger in the process, but he did it. The guy even drilled holes in the base of Roger's trophies. It's hard to understand why he'd be suspicious of a Belgian motocross rider flying into an American airport from a Latin American country carrying a Japanese bike, but then you can't be too careful.

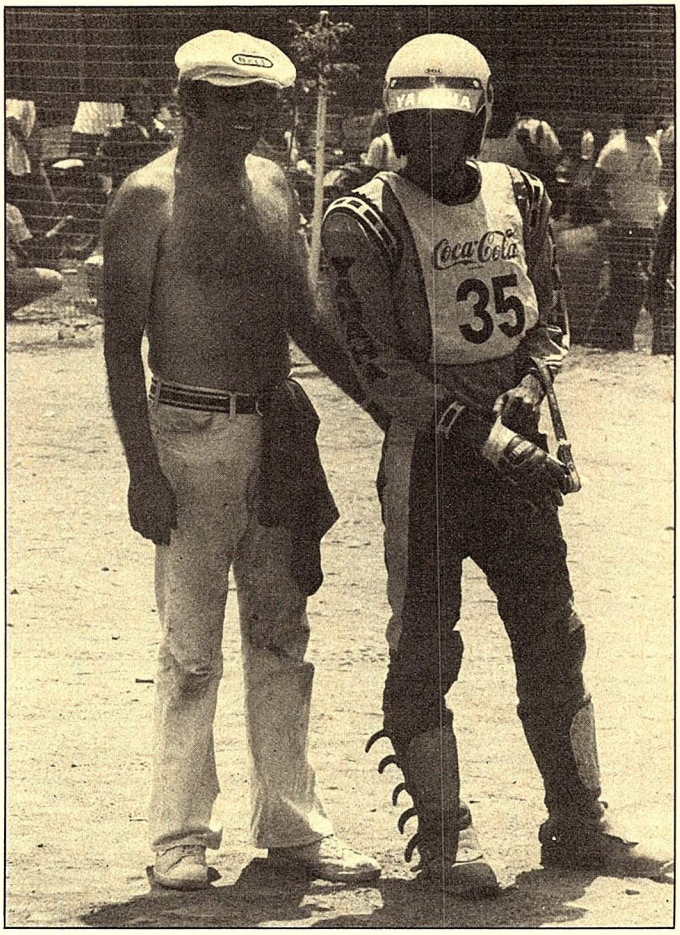


Nivanor Bernardi, factory rider for Yamaha and champion of Brazil, had his seat mounts break during the second day's racing. He finished fourth for the event.

Diesel oil mixed into the soil keeps the dust down as former Peruvian champ Rafael Belmont battles Venezuela's Fernando Macia (2).



Driving in Lima is typically South American or Italian. Lanes, traffic signals, stop signs and pedestrians mean nothing to four-wheelers. The most important item is a horn. No Peruvian could drive without one.



Giacomo De Col was the only South American rider to hang on to DeCoster in any of the four races. Flat tires and other problems earned him a fifth overall. His younger brother won the "standard" 125 class and took home a new 100cc Yamaha for his efforts.

III MOTOCROSS DE LAS AMERICAS

1.	Roger DeCoster	Suz	Belgium
2.	Ivan Bulos	Mai	Peru
3.	Jorge Herrera	Yam	Chile
4.	Nivanor Bernardi	Yam	Brazil
5.	Giacomo De Col	Yam	Peru
6.	David Bailey	Bul	U.S.A.
7.	Remo Boeck	KTM	Peru
8.	Rafael Belmont	Mai	Peru
9.	Tater Ledgard	Mai	Peru
10.	Fernando Macias	Yam	Ven.
11.	Enrique Martinelli	Bul	Peru
12.	Claudio Pesce	Yam	Argen.
13.	Nigel Smith	KTM	Peru
14.	Rolly Barton	Yam	Peru
15.	Gustavao Biamonte	Yam	Argen.

125cc Standard

1.	Louis De Col	Yam	Peru
2.	Pedro Vasquez	Hon	Peru
3.	Jorge Torres	Yam	Peru

Peru's Ivan Bulos, on DeCoster's left, is probably the fastest motocrosser in South America. The present Peruvian champ finished second to DeCoster with consistent come-from-behind rides. Chile's Jorge Herrera was third and Peru's Giacomo De Col (35) was fifth.

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RACE TEST

YAMAHA YZ400E versus SUZUKI RM400C

Japan's biggest bores

☐ Hearing the word shootout can cause one to conjure up images of head-to-head confrontations down motocross' main street. It used to be relatively easy to have a comparison test between Yamaha and Suzuki and quickly decide a winner. But these are competitive times in motocross racing, and the factories are making a serious effort to get their shifts together.

In 1977 the Yamaha YZ400D was one of the best new entries into the field of open class mounts. Power and suspension were the pluses that made the YZ extremely popular with the buying public. 1978 has been greeted by the release of the YZ400E. The E-model looks and feels identical to the D-model. The changes are only evident to those who make a careful inspection. Most noticeable are the new aluminum swingarm on the rear and longer fork sliders on the front. Those of you with an eye for color coordination will probably just see the new yellow fork boots. If you are only attracted to changes in color, you will miss the new chrome moly frame, larger cables, added chain roller on the frame, or the stronger handlebars. To smooth the power out a little the computer came up with a new crank balancing factor in 1978 that decreases vibration. Although the E-model is not a totally new craft, it does bear witness to a series of modifications designed to keep it in tune with the competition.

Suzuki's latest open class mount is totally new. The old RM370 is gone. The only pieces still remaining from the 370 are the frame, seat and air box. The biggest change comes in the motor. Not only is it given an enormous boost in capacity, but the stroke is also increased to maintain the benefits of the long-stroke motor. The Suzuki big-bore has completely new fenders, tank, handlebars and number plate. The swingarm is aluminum and the rear brake is full-floating. The front forks have been vastly improved over the old RM370 with the addition of air/oil damping, bar-backs and rubber-mounted handlebars. The Suzuki is the most improved big bike of the year.

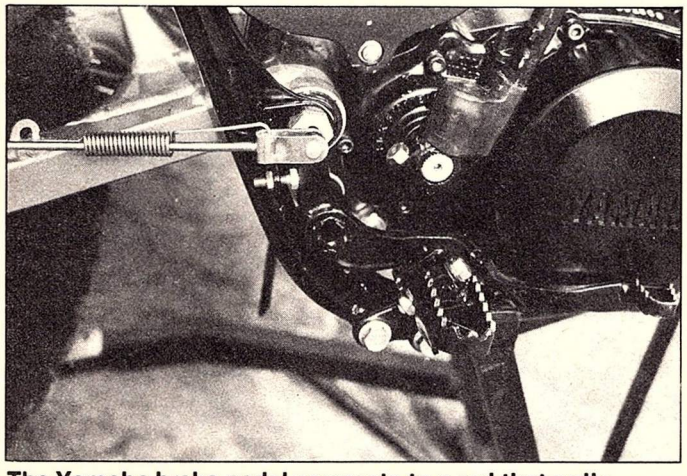
We raced both bikes, lived with both machines and tried to cope with them for as long a period of time as possible. In the course of our testing we broke both bikes. We found some surprising things. Here they are.

HANDLING

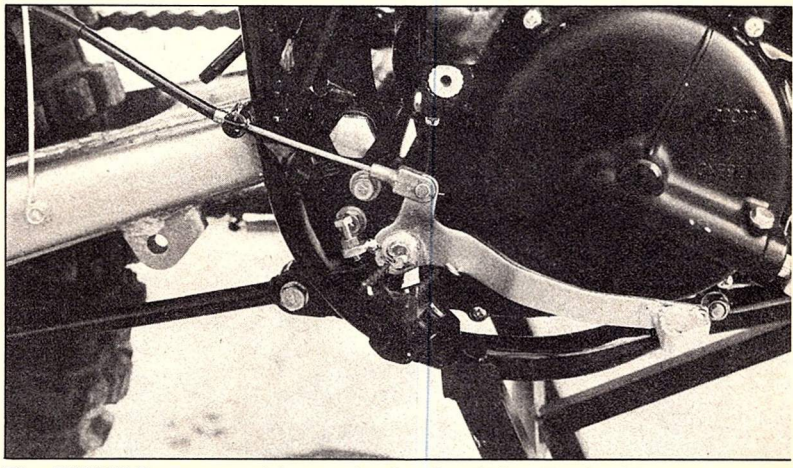
Both bikes handle very well. The computers in Japan and high-paid test riders throughout the world have done

BJ

YAMAHA YZ400E versus SUZUKI RM400C

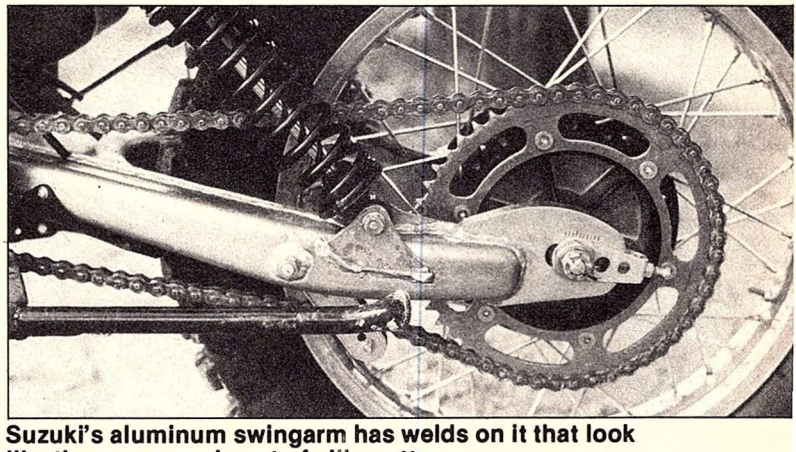


The Yamaha brake pedal connects to a rod that pulls directly through the swingarm pivot point. This method is the next best thing to a full-floating rear brake.

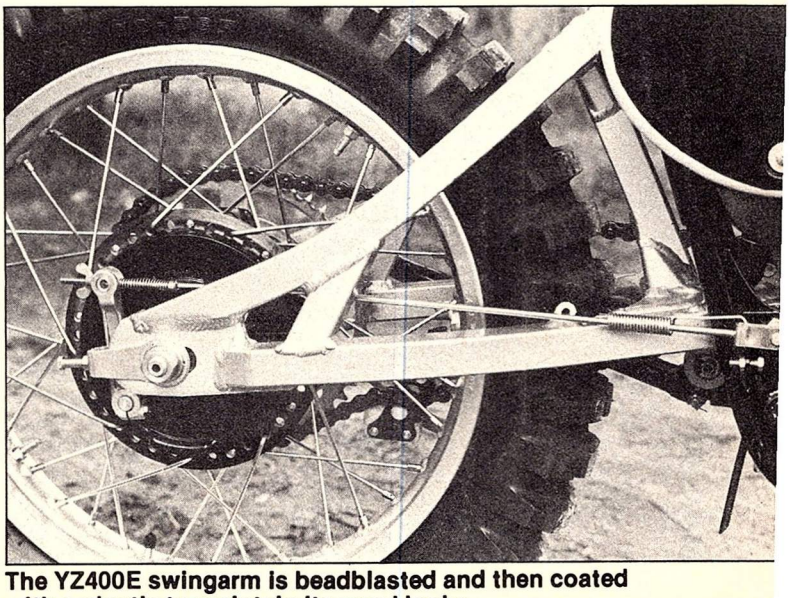


The RM400C uses a cable rear brake, but it is attached to a full-floating rear brake so it doesn't matter where the brake pull is located.

When you put the hammer down you can expect the front to come up. The Yamaha is a shade faster.



Suzuki's aluminum swingarm has welds on it that look like they were made out of silly putty.



The YZ400E swingarm is beadblasted and then coated with a plastic to maintain its good looks.

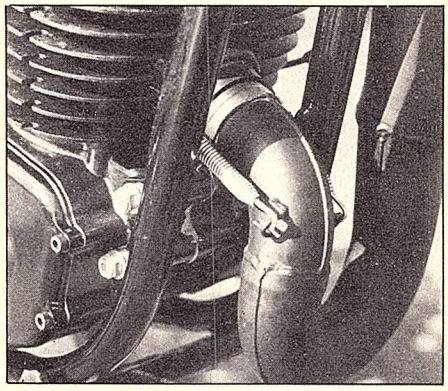
their jobs very well. Yet both bikes handle differently. Each has its own particular philosophy of control behind its design. The Suzuki RM400 is smoother and more controllable than the Yamaha, while the YZ400 is quicker and more responsive.

The YZ and RM share the same front end. The rake is the same, the tires are the same, the forks are essentially the same and the wheels are the same. But the front end handling of the bikes is completely opposite. The Yamaha corners sharper, dives in much more radically and changes lines quicker. The YZ's traits are due in part to its higher weight and one-inch-shorter wheelbase. The Suzuki, on the other hand, is a lot more stable. Cornering is a degree slower, but also a shade better. When two machines have the same geometry and components, you expect them to be similar. Although the YZ and RM have the same numbers up front, the differences from there back contribute to the handling disparity. The Suzuki has a longer wheelbase, a longer swingarm and a lower center of gravity. The result is slightly slower turning and more stability.

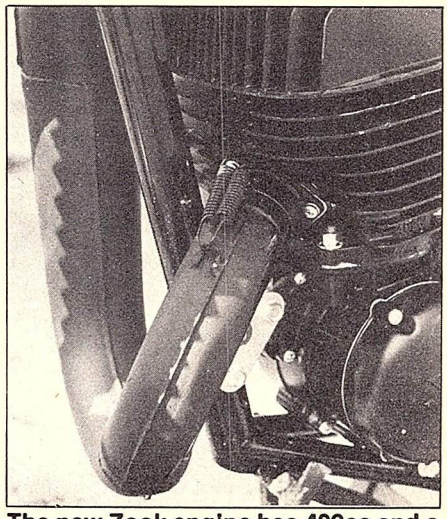
The RM400C and the YZ400E represent two different philosophies of racing. The Ying and Yang of MX.

SUSPENSION

The suspension plays a part in how a machine handles only in that its length and performance will change the attitude or angle of the contact patches and weight biases. The Yamaha has more suspension travel at the rear wheel. The YZ rear end has 255mm (ten inches) of travel, an increase of 5mm over the D-model. This increase is due in part to the slightly changed dimensions of the aluminum swingarm



The Yamaha engine displaces 397cc and has a double-downtube frame. Yamaha's radial head makes the engine look sano.



The new Zook engine has 402cc and a single-downtube frame. New on the RM this year are aluminum motor mounting plates.

BIGGER . . . BETTER?

One of the attractions of the big bike class is that the bikes rarely break, as compared to their tiddler siblings. So, we were surprised to encounter major problems with both the RM400C and YZ400E.

The RM400 hooked a ring in the exhaust port. The resulting snag knocked a large section of the piston dome loose. The chunk went on out the exhaust port, but the piston was ruined along with the ring. Suzuki did extensive testing on the RM400 engine before releasing it and had not experienced any ring problems during their testing. Our bike was one of the first production 402s. The technique used to avoid rings snagging in the ports is called chamfering. Perhaps this one engine slipped down the production line and the small white-clad Japanese woman in charge of grinding, chamfering the ports was answering the call of nature. We suggest pulling the head and cylinder off of your RM400 and checking the edges of the exhaust port to ensure that they have been chamfered. One sharp, straight-edged port is enough to eat your ring, which in turn can destroy your piston, cylinder and crank.

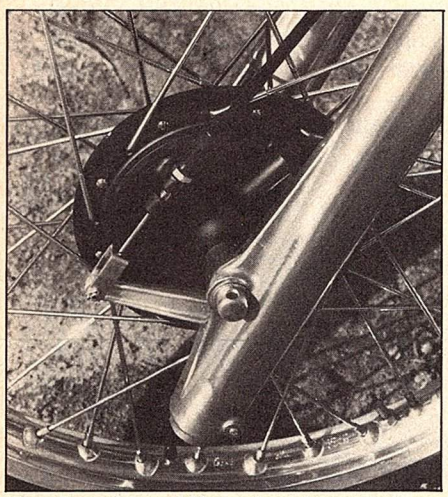
The YZ400E was the victim of a downhill loop-out. Nothing spectacular, but the frame tubes by the rear fender were bent upwards. We straightened these out to the best of our ability, but the bike never really felt the same. We returned the bike to Yamaha for new fenders and to have the shock checked. Yamaha assured us that nothing was wrong with either the frame or monoshock. But when the time came for us to pick the bike back up for a photo session, a brand, spanking new YZ400E replaced our old reliable test model.

Suzuki sent our engine to the technical service department for evaluation and gave us a new bike. Yamaha sent our bike to their service department and gave us a new bike. They won't do it for you, so be warned. Big bikes can break!

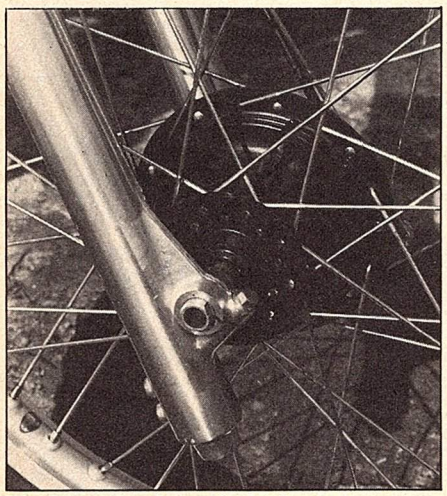
YAMAHA YZ400E versus SUZUKI RM400C

and the use of a Teflon bushing inside the monoshock. The Teflon bushing improves the feel of the shock over last year. The Suzuki's shorter rear wheel travel, by almost an inch, makes the rear of the RM sit lower.

The front forks on both bikes are equal. Kayaba makes the forks for both companies. There are differences in design, but these intricacies work out to achieve the same result. The lower slider of the YZ400E front fork has been increased 20mm. This additional slider improves the fork overlap and also increases the air/oil volume for



The Suzuki and Yamaha share the same basic front forks. Only the cosmetics have been changed to protect the innocent.



The Yamaha front forks have two drain plugs machined to the legs. One is blank but is left over from last year's forks which were 20mm shorter.

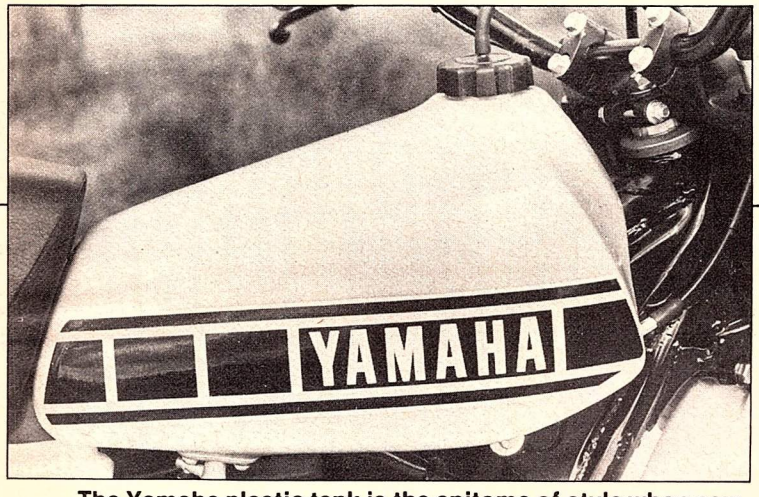
The quick-turning Yamaha gets aced out on the inside by the smoother-running RM400 Suzuki. Both bikes have more than adequate beans.

more adjustability. Suzuki had extensions added to the upper legs of last year's RM250C front forks to increase the air/oil volume and topped it off with a totally new set of triple clamps.

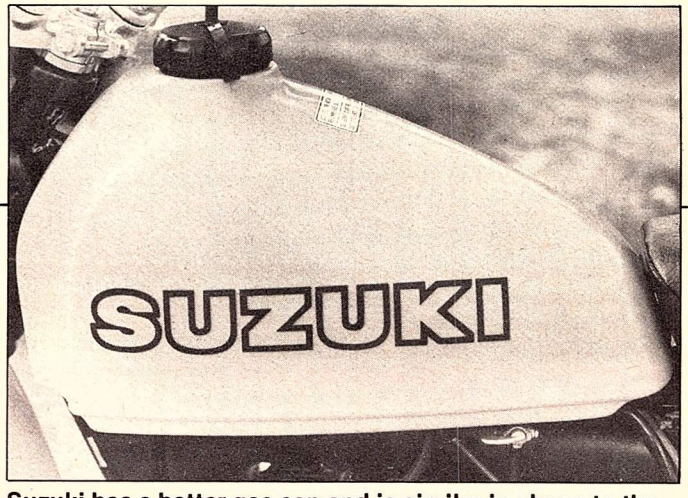
Both bikes are using aluminum swingarms in 1978. The Yamaha swingarm is a class construction compared to the Suzuki swingarm. Perhaps fears of breakage or liability reared their ugly heads in Hammamatsu, because the Suzuki swingarm is larger than the old steel swingarm and perhaps the epitome of unattractiveness. The axle mounting plates are cut by hand out of aluminum stock on the Suzuki. Yamaha has the axle plates forged. In addition, the MIG welding on the Suzuki is sloppy. Suzuki's new shocks are an improvement. Kayaba has added adjustability into their previously over-dampened gas rear shocks. By removing the springs and turning the shaft, *a la* Koni, the damping can be adjusted three ways. The bikes come stock on the stiffest position.

ENGINES AND POWER

The Yamaha is faster. The Yamaha's power is more explosive and more direct. We are discussing 400cc motorcycles, so neither bike is slow, but Suzuki opted for a mellower powerband. The 80mm x 80mm bore and stroke of the RM400 delivers its power in a nice, steady dose. Again, Suzuki has served up a short-shifting motorcycle. There is little or no top-end power on the RM. The best riding technique is to shift, shift and shift again.

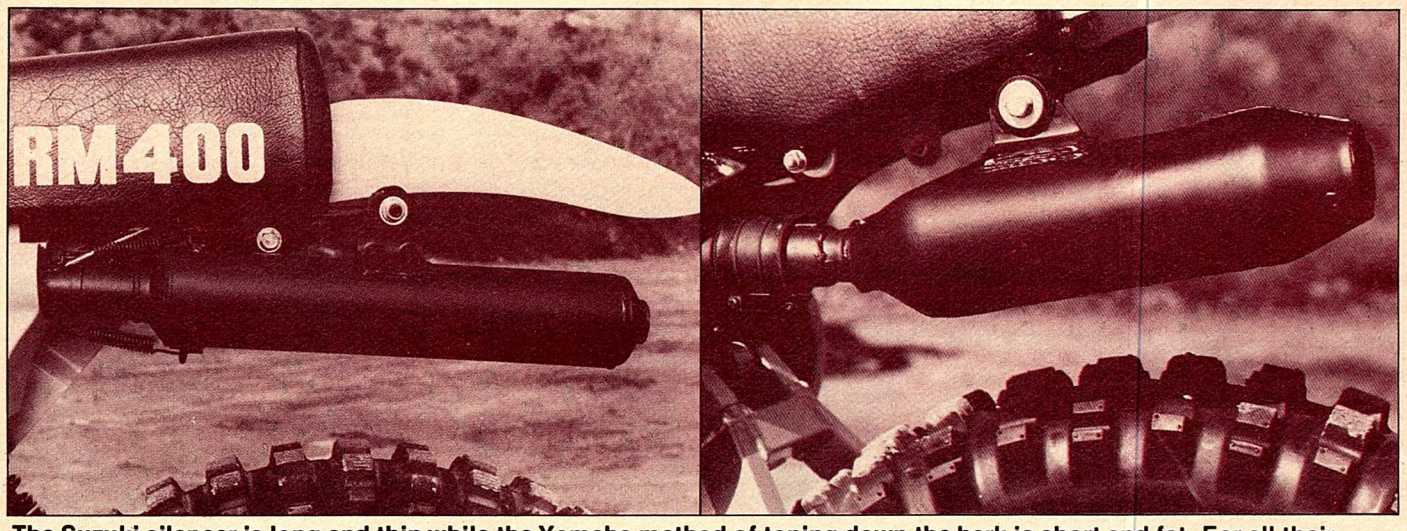


The Yamaha plastic tank is the epitome of style when new. Later on the decal will bubble up.



Suzuki has a better gas cap and is similar in shape to the Yamaha, but misses out on the graphics.

YAMAHA YZ400E versus SUZUKI RM400C



The Suzuki silencer is long and thin while the Yamaha method of toning down the bark is short and fat. For all their size they could be a lot more effective.

RM400C SPECIFICATIONS

Make	Suzuki
Model	RM400C
Country of Manufacture	Japan
Retail Price	$1699

ENGINE

Type	Single-cylinder, two-stroke, case reed valve
Bore and Stroke	80mm x 80mm
Displacement	402cc
Compression Ratio	6.7:1
Carburetion	36mm
Ignition	CDI
Lubrication	Pre-mix
Air Filter	Oiled foam
Transmission	Five-speed

CHASSIS DIMENSIONS

Overall Length	84.8 inches
Overall Width	34.6 inches
Overall Height	48.2 inches
Wheelbase	57.3 inches
Ground Clearance	12.2 inches
Dry Weight	238 pounds

CAPACITIES

Fuel	2.2 gallons

SUSPENSION

Front	Air/spring telescopic fork, Kayaba
Rear	Kayaba gas shocks, three-way adjustable

YZ400E SPECIFICATIONS

Make	Yamaha
Model	YZ400E
Country of Manufacture	Japan
Retail Price	$1598

ENGINE

Type	Single-cylinder, two-stroke, reed valve
Bore and Stroke	85mm x 70mm
Displacement	397cc
Compression Ratio	7.6:1
Carburetion	38mm Mikuni
Ignition	CDI
Lubrication	Pre-mix
Air Filter	Oiled foam
Transmission	Five-speed

CHASSIS DIMENSIONS

Overall Length	84.1 inches
Overall Width	35.8 inches
Overall Height	46.5 inches
Wheelbase	56.7 inches
Ground Clearance	11.4 inches
Dry Weight	227 pounds

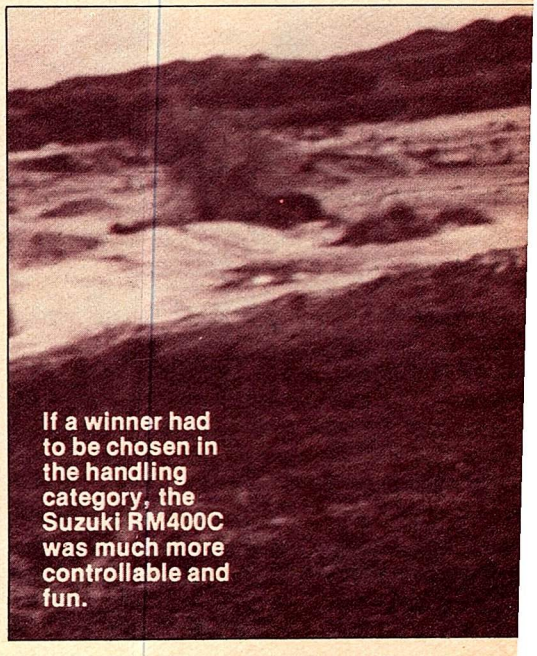
CAPACITIES

Fuel	2.1 gallons
Oil Tank	N/A

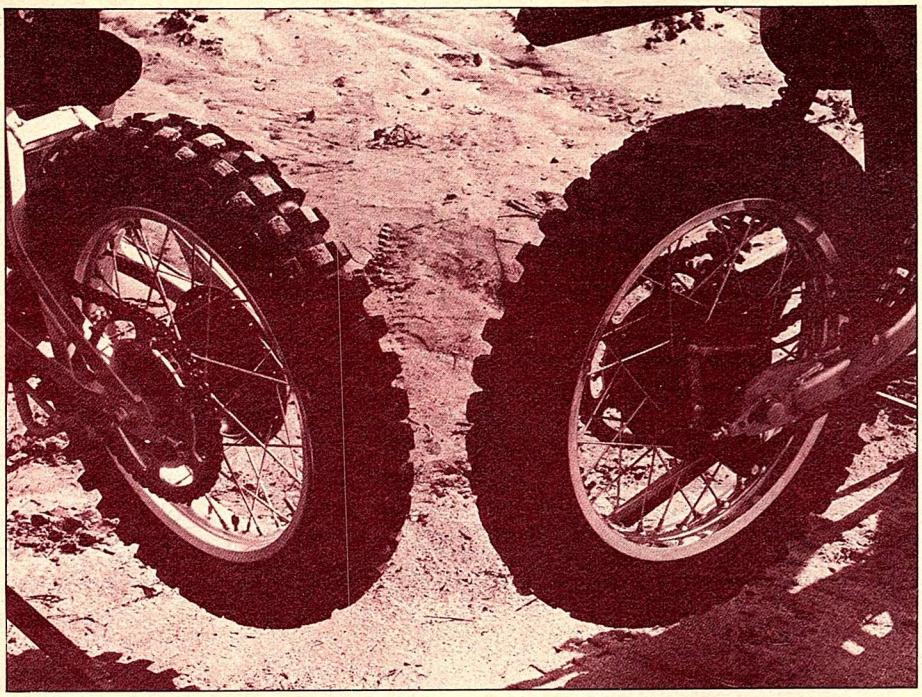
SUSPENSION

Front	Air/spring telescopic forks, Kayaba
Rear	Kayaba monoshock

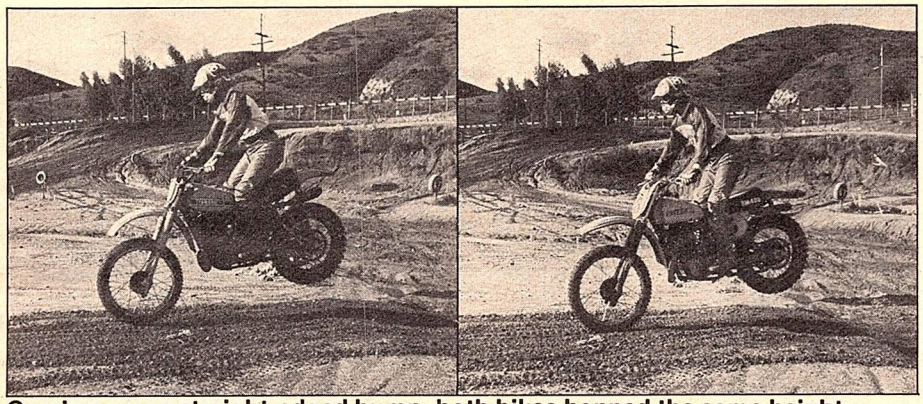
Suzuki's new triple clamps have rubber-mounted handlebars and bar-backs this year. The forks have their volume increased by a large, extended fork cap.



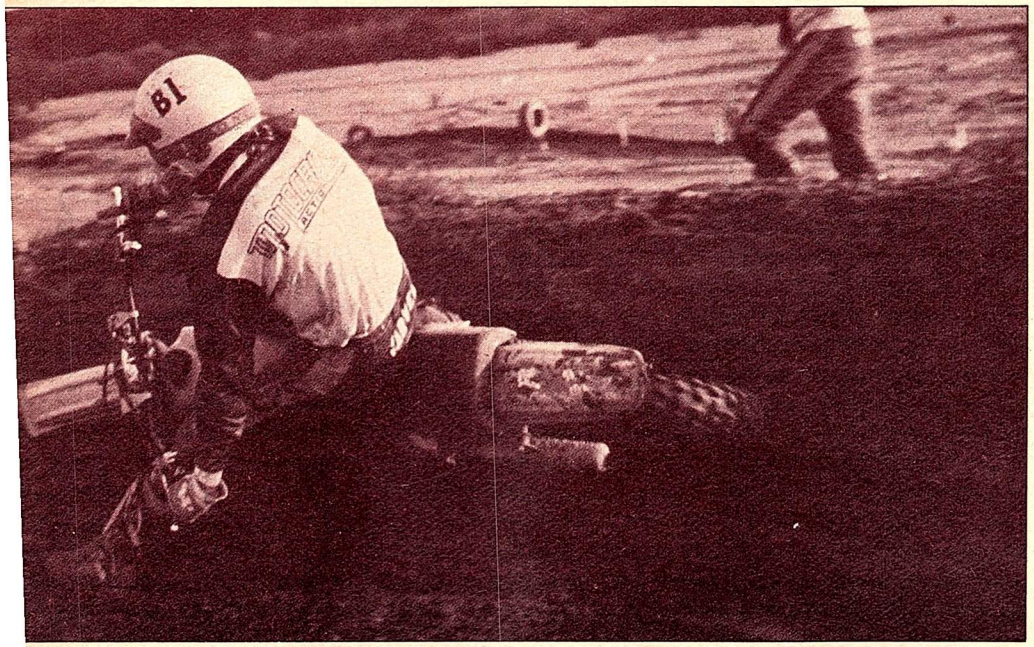
If a winner had to be chosen in the handling category, the Suzuki RM400C was much more controllable and fun.



The business ends are shod with the same set of sneakers.



Coming over a straight-edged bump, both bikes hopped the same height. Both monoshock and Suzuki shocks are adjustable.



Yamaha utilizes an 85mm bore and 70mm stroke paired with a 38mm Mikuni that pumps through a conventional reed valve. Suzuki's long-stroke motor uses a 36mm Mikuni and case reeds. The bikes share the same ignition, but have a different philosophy of power. Yamaha gives you a goose and a half, while Suzuki gives the bike a mellow pull. In going for the holeshot the Yamaha would win every time if there was traction. Without traction, the Suzuki's smoother powerband should take the nod.

The engines also play an important part in the design of the frame and then ultimately in the handling of the bike. The Suzuki engine is small and compact. The RM400 engine is two inches shorter than the YZ400 engine. The RM400 swingarm is over one inch longer than the YZ400 swingarm. The longer swingarm accounts for the RM's steady feeling around the tracks. When you add the short wheelbase of the Yamaha with its quick handling and explosive power, you get wheelies. But you don't always get them when you want them. The Suzuki's longer wheelbase, lower weight and smoother power make it easy to handle.

RIDING STYLE

The Yamaha sits tall, turns sharp and has a healthy kick when the wick is turned up. To ride the Yamaha a rider has to get back and relax. Stay calm and supple. The YZ400 is best handled by staying over the rear wheel through the rough stuff and putting your fanny on the seat through the turns.

The Suzuki sits much lower thanks to a flat seat design. It requires the rider to move up on the tank in the turns, and to work the shifter whenever possible. The Suzuki will benefit from hard riding more than the Yamaha will.

Both bikes will hop through the rough stuff. We made repeated attempts to see which one would hop the highest, farthest or longest. When we tried to do it, neither bike was a standout in the out-of-control area. But when we weren't concentrating on trying to do it we found that the Yamaha had a slightly higher tendency to hop and swap.

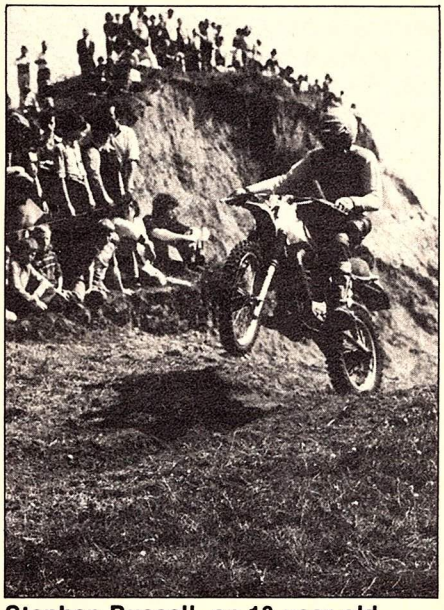
DURABILITY AND SERVICEABILITY

These bikes are so much alike in design and components that trying to find the breaking point for either one is not easy. The tires are equal on both

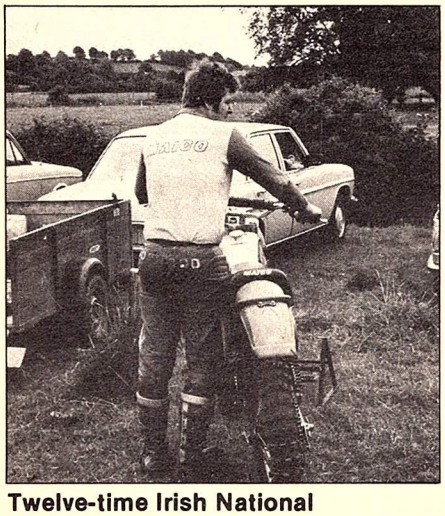
(*continued on page 68*)

TRAVELOGUE

DICING ON THE EMERALD ISLE



Stephen Russell, an 18-year-old hotshot from Ulster, plows some local farmland.



Twelve-time Irish National Motocross Champion Winston Norwood prepares to load his Maico into the standard Irish trailer.

A look at Irish MX

By Don Wilson

☐ When you think of Ireland, what comes to mind? Hopefully, an island off the coast of England, made up of rolling hills and lush green pastures dotted with white brick cottages, stone fences and peat bogs. You might also know that the Irish are quite fond of sports, particularly rugby, soccer and horse racing. What you may not know is that another type of racing is becoming popular here — motocross.

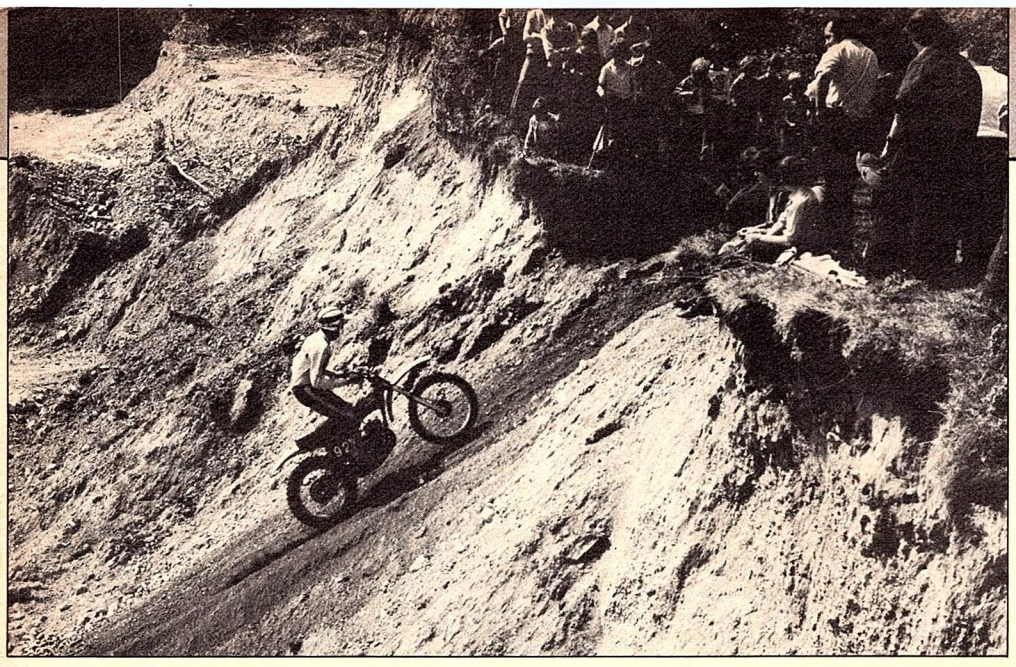
Although the Irish have been somewhat active in motocross for many years — so that even today when you are bench racing in a local pub after an event, it's easy to find yourself in a conversation (over a pint of Guinness, of course!) about the days when Matchlesses and BSAs were the bikes to have — only recently has the sport started to expand.

Three main centers of MX activity have developed, all situated (naturally) around Ireland's three largest cities, Dublin, the Capital of the Republic, Belfast, in Northern Ireland, and Cork, which is on the southern coast. Of the three, it is around Belfast where motocross is really gaining popularity and making strong inroads into the more traditional sports. The reason for Belfast's popularity is that it, like Scotland and Wales, is part of the United Kingdom, so bikes and accessories carry British price tags, which are roughly the same as in the United States. In the Irish Republic, though, where imported goods are heavily taxed, the cost of equipment ranges 20 to 30 percent higher. In Dublin or Cork the price of a CZ is about $1600, a Bultaco at least $2000 and a CCM would be pushing $4000! As the Irish would say, "a bit dear."

This high cost makes motocross a sport mainly for the older and better-financed Irishman. Rarely are any of the competitors under age 20 or so, because it isn't until then that anyone can afford to go racing. This is partly the reason why Ireland has no 125cc class. A few years ago one did exist, with the rule similar to those of England, where once past the age of 16 a rider isn't allowed to compete in the 125 or "schoolboy" class; now lack of interest has eliminated it altogether. Today anyone just starting out plunges in for at least a 250.

At most any local meet the machinery is 90-percent European, consisting mainly of CZs, Bultacos, Huskys, Maicos and a few CCMs. Fewer still are Yamahas and Suzukis, for in the past the Irish importers have been more interested in road racing and very few motocrossers were brought in from Japan. However, with Roger DeCoster's championships and now Heikki Mikkola's success, and the excellent reputations of RMs and YZs worldwide, Ireland is certain to see more Japanese 'crossers at upcoming events.

The average Irish motocross event is held quite differently than in America. A small country, only 306 miles at its longest point and 180 miles wide, Ireland is also blessed with uncrowded roads, so getting up at five a.m. to drive for a couple of hours to the track is unheard of. Instead, rolling out of bed at 11 will give you plenty of time to



find the correct pasture or quarry that a generous farmer has lent to the organizing club. All clubs, by the way, are affiliated with the Motor Cycle Union of Ireland, which governs all types of Irish cycle racing.

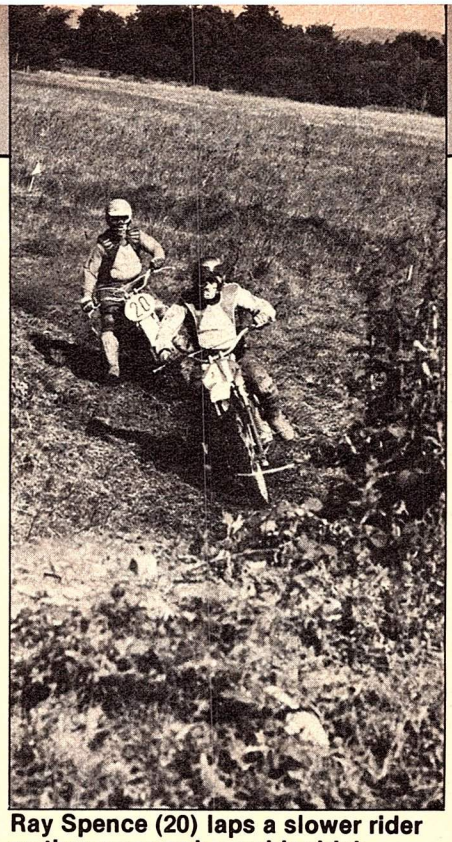
Practice usually begins around one p.m. and the racing gets going an hour later. The riders are divided into Experts, Seniors and Juniors, with each class riding in two motos, each 20 minutes long. Any size of machine is allowed in these races, and surprisingly, several of the Experts use 250s. After these are both a 250cc class and 500cc class, followed by a club race — which is open only to the members of the organizing club — and lastly, a non-winners' race. At the Irish championship rounds the format is a bit different. The Senior class is eliminated, leaving the Experts, who are contesting the championship, and the supporting Juniors. In an effort to keep up with continental standards, the national championship motos are 30 minutes plus two laps long.

Ireland's number one rider is Winston Norwood, a Comber (near Belfast) motorcycle dealer. Despite losing the title last year to Maico-mounted Dave Crockard, Winston has been a dominant force in Irish motocrossing for over 15 years and has succeeded in being Irish Champion something like 12 times! (One begins to lose count after the second handful.) Short and stocky, he looks as if he would be more at home on a Massey Ferguson than his 400 GP Maico. But once he gets off the line, he leaves no doubt as to his ability, and often the question of the race becomes who will finish second.

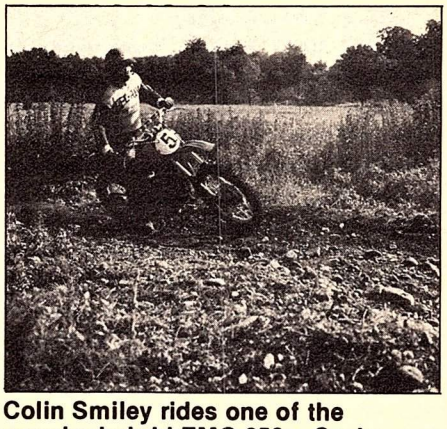
A new breed of riders, the young, dealer-sponsored teenagers, are collecting most of those seconds, and scoring more and more wins as well. The most successful of these up-and-comers is David Watson, who has been tearing up the circuits of Northern Ireland on his Maico with a smooth, mature style that belies his 16 years. Recently, though, David has given up his Irish license and gone to England to compete in the British championships. He is not the first to do so, though. Because of the lack of international competition in Ireland (only two or three events per year), Irish riders must resort to the time-honored tradition of emigrating, this time to the stiffer competition of England. They have fared well there, particularly Roger Wilkinson, who is now a factory rider on the new EMC team. Another factor urging the top riders away from Ireland is the very poor prize money. At best, $20 is the most one can expect from a championship win.

On the home front, Watson's departure has left other rising stars such as Lawrence Spence and Stephen Russell to continue the Ulster domination of Irish motocross, while also providing some close, exciting racing between themselves.

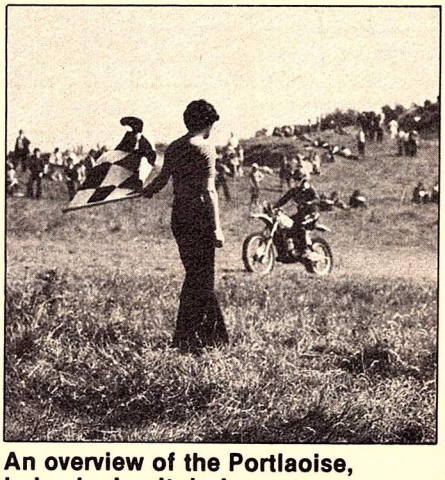
This is Irish motocross in a nutshell. Excellent local competition, which is now rising in popularity, and easy access to the tough, demanding circuits of England and the continent. With a training ground like that, it can only be a matter of time before Irish riders begin to crack the headlines. So keep your ears open, for in the future you may be hearing a lot more about motocross on the Emerald Isle.



Ray Spence (20) laps a slower rider as they approach a cobby Irish uphill.



Colin Smiley rides one of the popular hybrid EMC 250s. Sachs motor, special frame and Maico accessories are used in the EMC.



An overview of the Portlaoise, Ireland, circuit during a Championship round won by EMC-mounted Ray Spence.

PRODUCT EVALUATION

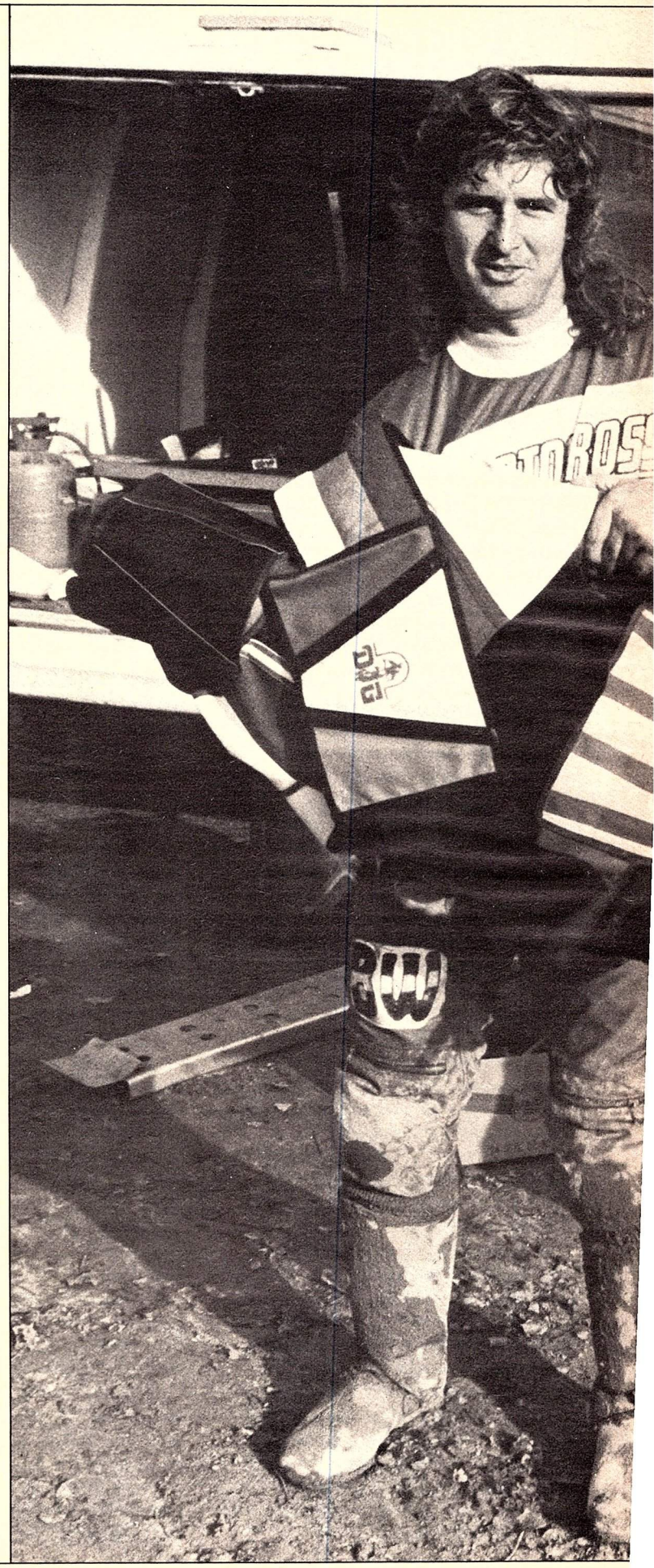
KIDNEY BELT-OUT

The battle of the bulge

☐ You either love them or you hate them. Nobody has an ambiguous attitude toward that restrictive, binding and girlish girdle known as the kidney belt. The intrepid MXA test crew is not scared away by a little controversy. So, if you are one of the people who love to wear a kidney belt and wouldn't venture out onto the track on your personal bucking amalgamation of metal and plastic — congratulations. On the other hand, if you are one of those boorish, insensitive nitwits who refuse to take advantage of the beneficial aspects of the kidney belt — so be it.

Approaching our personal motocross doctor, who we keep on a retainer and 24-hour standby, we broached the subject of what a kidney belt does and doesn't do. We know from experience that it doesn't improve your riding or make you faster overnight. Essentially the kidney belt serves three functions; two immediate and one long-term. First, the wrappings of the elastic belt protect your vulnerable beer belly from piercing blows, scraping ulcerations and scarring lacerations. Secondly, the kidney belt serves a function in securing your organs, within their own fluid suspension, from the dangers of violent shocks and blows. As important as these two functions are to a full-time crasher, the third aspect of wearing a kidney belt is the one to worry about. Riding a motocross bike, jogging, working a jackhammer or doing a hard night of boogying at the disco has a cumulative negative effect on the performance of the organs being jousted around. The more the organs are dislocated, the less likely they are to function at 100 percent. Our doctor assured us that he was not going to name diseases or major medical traumas to scare us, but he did say this: If two riders rode the same amount for five years, and one wore a kidney belt and the other didn't, it is conceivable that ten years later you could tell which rider didn't by his proximity to the restroom.

That certainly sounds like scare tactics to us. So to that end we rounded up all the kidney belts we could find, strapped them on and went riding. Testing something that few people know anything about is difficult. The ratings found in the test really correlate more to comfort, construction, quality of material and design than to any potential medical benefit. There were no startlingly innovative designs, but the spread in implementation of the standard design was interesting.



Testing kidney belts could be the next craze for people into bondage. But that's another sport.

KIDNEY BELT-OUT

THE GOLD BELT — $16.95 — Da winner

The Gold Belt was the best made of the belts we tested. It is also the most popular. It is 40 inches long and 8½ inches wide. That is bigger than its competition. The metal stays inside the back piece are a half-inch wide and plastic-coated. The Velcro receiver makes up the full width of the belt. Only Gold Belt and Malcolm Smith (whose belt is made by Gold Belt) have this feature. The Velcro hooking material, which closes the belt, is two inches wide. The sewing is top-rate. There is reinforcing on the nylon stay covering. The stay covering is also cut with a hot knife to keep it from fraying. The Gold Belt comes in a plastic package, it has a label and washing instructions sewn on, plus you get a decal.

MALCOLM SMITH GOLD BELT — $16.95 — The winner's brother

The Malcolm Smith Gold Belt has the same fine qualities as the original Gold Belt, but comes in an assortment of colors. Malcolm also has his label sewn in right next to the Gold Belt label.

THE BOLD BELT — $16.95 — The winner's shadow

The Bold Belt is an almost exact replica of the Gold Belt, but it is not constructed as well. The back stays are one inch too short to fit the width of the belt. The stays are a half-inch wide and plastic-coated. The Velcro receiving material comes in two strips instead of full width. The Velcro hooking material is two strips of one-inch-wide material. The sewing is good, but there is no reinforcing. The nylon stay covers are not cut with a hot knife and will unravel in time, but this will happen to all the belts using nylon (except the Gold Belt). The Bold Belt is an inferior copy of the Gold Belt, so when you are purchasing a kidney belt be sure to know which one you want.

BILL WALTERS — $16.95 — Fourth

Bill Walters makes a snazzy looking red, white and blue belt that ranks fourth in our test. It is 37½ inches long and 8¼ inches wide. The metal stays inside the back piece are only a quarter-inch wide, but there are four of them. The stays are plastic-coated. The Velcro receiver material comes in two-inch-wide strips and the Velcro hooking material is only 1½ inches wide. The sewing is sloppy. There are no labels, washing instructions or decals included.

WEBCO — $16.95 — Fifth

The Webco kidney belt was well constructed and came in a plastic package with a Webco label sewn on. The two stays were a half-inch wide and plastic-coated. The stay covers were made from very thick leather. We would have rated the Webco belt (and DG belt) much higher but for the choice of materials. The body of the belt is made out of Cordura. Cordura is a loosely woven material that is bonded together by a plastic backing. Our experience with Cordura is that it unravels much sooner than the cotton-polyester that the other makers use.

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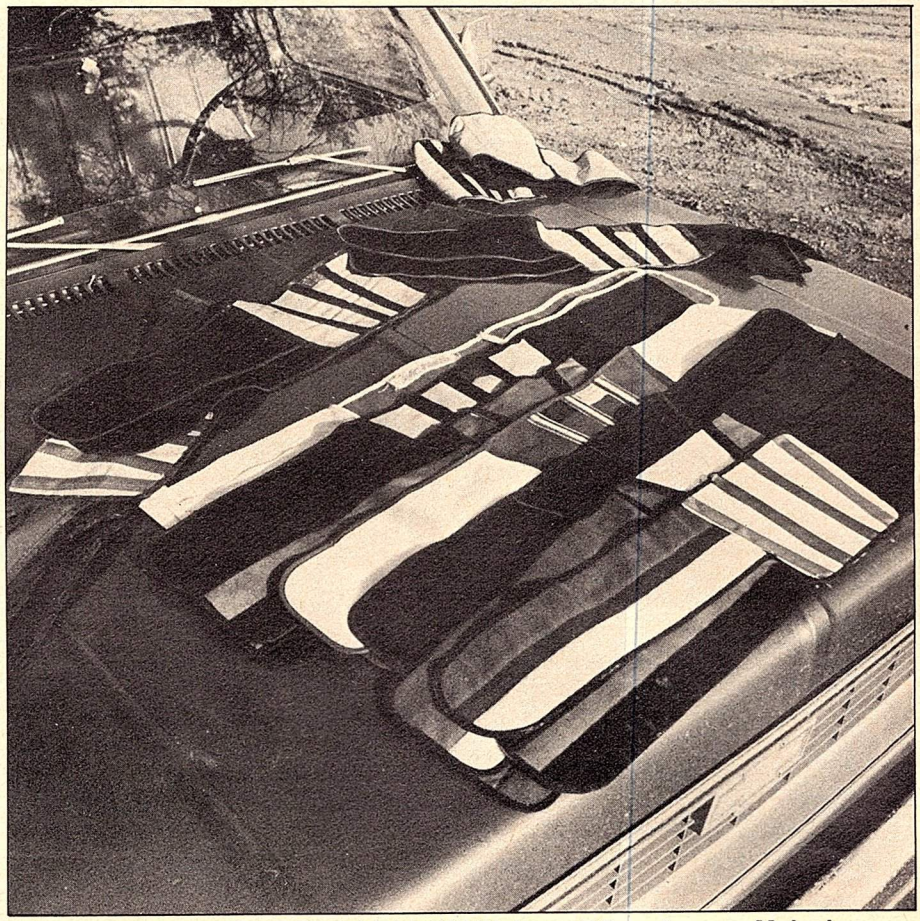

The belts, from grille to windshield: Bill Walters, DG, unknown, Malcolm Smith, Webco, Gold Belt, Air Flow and miscellaneous.

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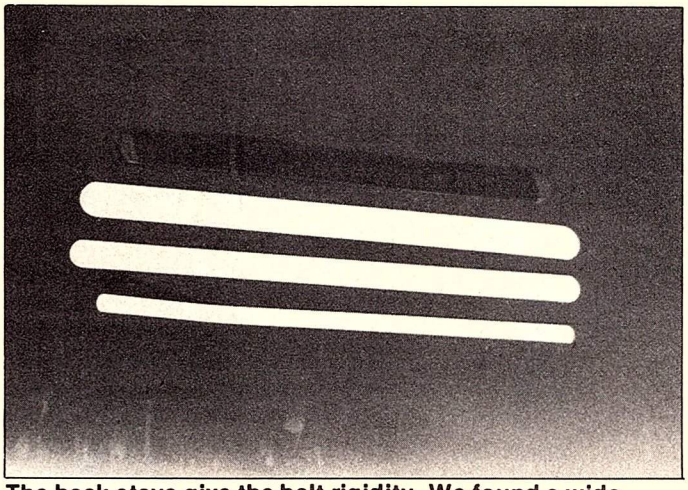

The back stays give the belt rigidity. We found a wide variety of sizes and widths of stays in our test belts.

The Webco belt had two strips of two-inch-wide Velcro receiver per strap and a two-inch strip of Velcro hooking material. The Webco belt was well made and the sewing was double-stitched in many important places.

DG PERFORMANCE SPECIALTIES — $16.95 — Son of fifth

The DG kidney belt is a red, white and blue version of the Webco belt and thus rates the same as the Webco belt. The use of the prone to unravel Cordura material hurts those two fine belts. The DG belt comes in a plastic package and is emblazoned with the DG logo on the back.

ENDURA AIR FLOW — $16.95 — Next to last

The Endura Air Flow was the most innovative of the kidney belts we looked at. The body of the belt was constructed of a blue plastic webbing, similar to a window screen. This design was to allow air to flow through to your overheated body. The rest of the belt was not very inventive. The belt had two metal stays that had only the tips plastic-coated. The uncoated stays will rust. The stays themselves were the widest of the test (¾-inch), but the lack of plastic coating makes them the worst. The Velcro receiver was three strips of one-inch material. The hooking material was a two-inch strip.

The stitching and workmanship was second-rate. The belt itself, longer than most, was labeled, came in a plastic package, but had no washing instructions.

????? — $12.95 — Last and least

We picked this beauty up in a motorcycle shop. It had no elastic at all. This belt is similar to the kind of belt that was available several years ago. It had three leather-covered stays that were only a quarter-inch wide. The stays were plastic-coated, though. It had no package, no label, no decals, no washing instructions, no reinforcing and no elastic. It was like wearing a cardboard tube. It was the cheapest by $4, but not worth it.

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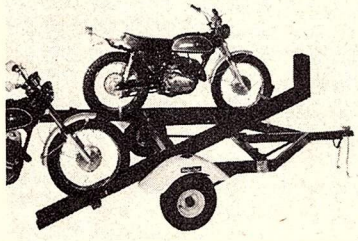

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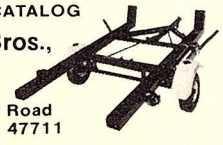
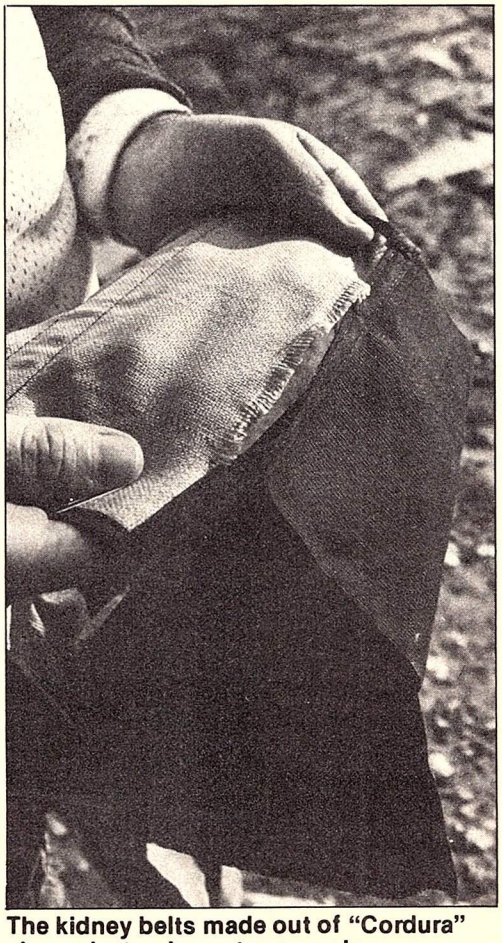
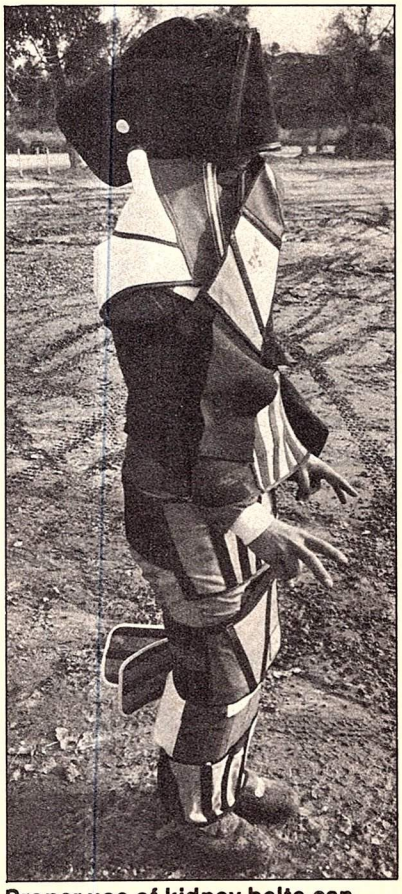




The kidney belts made out of "Cordura" showed a tendency to unravel.



Proper use of kidney belts can offer maximum protection, but limited mobility.

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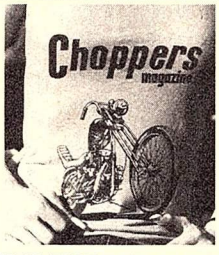

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PRODUCT EVALUATION

GERMAN PIT TRICKS

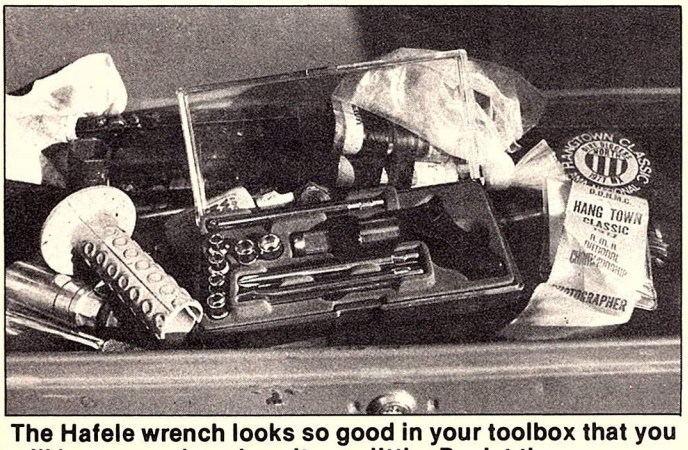
Hafele super set

By Jody Weisel

☐ Walking through the pits at Trans-AMA time allows an alert observer to spot the world's best mechanics at work. Each country's spanners have their own peculiar techniques and styles, but the Germans have their own tools! Checking out a German mechanic's toolbox always reveals a few trick items that the American toolbox doesn't have. One of the hot items that we spotted this year was the Hafele Rapid-Action Screwdriver.

To get a bike stripped down to its barest minimum is often a tedious task. It is made tedious by the popular usage of 10mm bolts and Phillips screws. Side panels, carburetors, fork boots and throttles often use the screws, while the fenders, air box, levers and miscellaneous pieces are all 10mm bolts. Wiggling wrenches up into crevices and under frame tubes is no fun. But over in the German pits the fenders and accessories just seem to fly off. The reason is that they have a tool designed to work efficiently and quickly in tight places.

The Hafele Rapid-Action Screwdriver is actually a combination of a ratchet driver and a pistol grip. There is no spinning of tools and changing grips. With the Hafele you just aim the pistol and snap your wrist back and forth. The Hafele Super Set comes complete with 4mm and 6mm flat blade screwdrivers, two Phillips blades, 90mm connecting rod, and four sockets from size 5mm to 10mm. It is available for $14.95 from Eurotrend, 1360 So. Anaheim Blvd., Suite 224, Anaheim, California 92805; (714) 991-7148.



The Hafele wrench looks so good in your toolbox that you will be tempted to clean it up a little. Resist the urge.

On the top of the pistol grip is the ratchet locking device.

The tool can whip a fender off quicker than any other instrument because of its design.

The small quarter-inch ratchet drive is good for bolts in the 10mm range, but not much larger.

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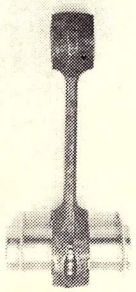

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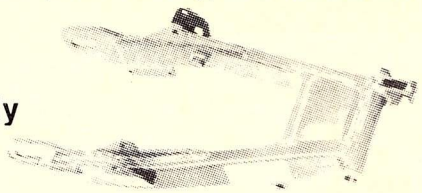

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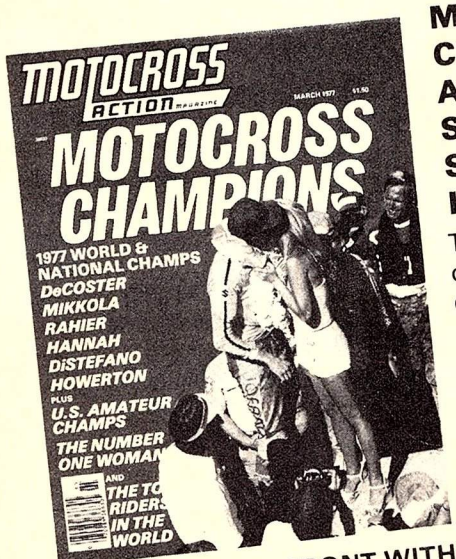

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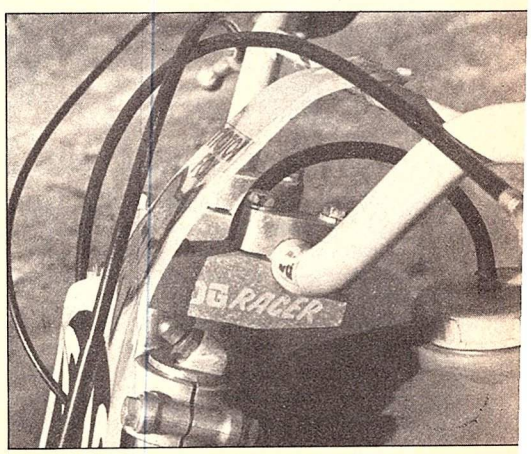
HODAKA WORKS 250

(continued from page 33)



Grand Prix Specialties made the bar-backs to help shorten the long gas tank's effects on the rider's arms. The bars are DG yellow chrome moly bars in a Suzuki bend.

Lance Moorewood did the early test riding on the bike and feels right at home. The pipe tucks completely out of the way.

anodized spoke and rim treatment. DG can lace up some of the strongest and best-looking wheels in the world. DG also supplied a gold-anodized aluminum swingarm. They do not make a part for production Hodakas, but were able to construct a rectangular aluminum swingarm in record time. It is similar to the ones that they have available for Suzukis, Yamahas and Hondas. DG Performance Specialties also laced up a 23-inch D.I.D rim to a Yokohama tire for soft tracks.

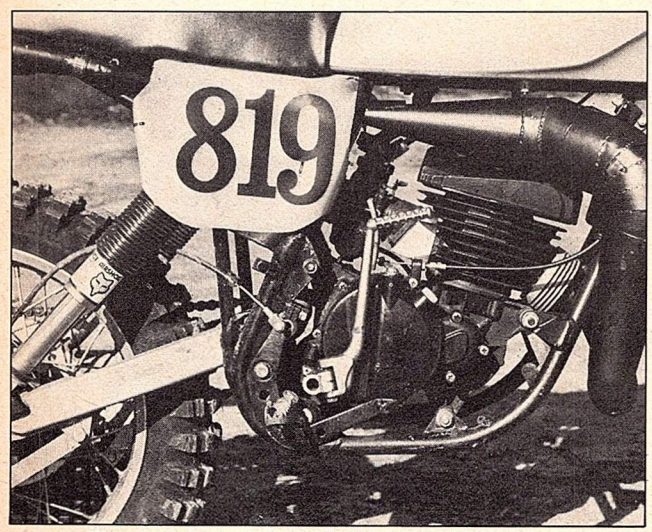
MEETING THE DEADLINE

The bike had a three-month deadline and time was running out. Production schedules are hard to meet on one-off special bikes. Grand Prix built an aluminum air box and side panels in one day after the engine was fitted into the frame. Rear sprockets had to be specially made at Circle Industries. DG, Grand Prix Specialties, Cycle Town, Moto-X Fox, JT Phase Two Filters, Kayaba, Tiger Distributing and Preston Petty Fenders all went out of their way to get parts and work done in a hurry.

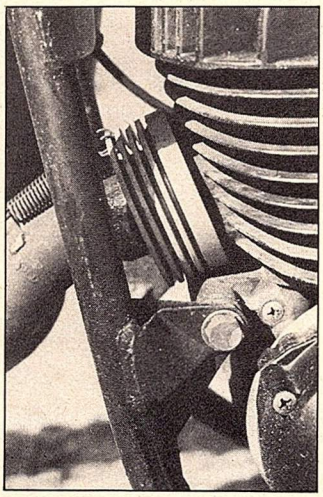
There are no ground rules in building a *works* bike. In Japan it is hidden away in a small room in a far wing of the factory, in Germany it sits in a workshop and is assembled by an experienced team of veterans, in Sweden it is a 100-foot room right off of the production line, but there are no set rules. The factory Hodaka was built by several different people, many of whom have never met, in three different locations in Southern California. No one at the Hodaka headquarters in Athena, Oregon, ever saw the bike in production. Marvin Foster kept in constant contact and monitored the progress, but even he never saw the bike. Such is the nature of works bikes. Tony D., Jammin' Jimmy and Bob Hannah don't know what they are going to be riding next week until the back of the truck is opened up.

WHAT'S SHE GOT?

What the Hodaka 250 works bike has is a competitive engine, nine inches of travel front and rear and an ambiguous blend of European workshop flavor and Japanese computer. You can't buy it. Hodaka won't sell it. The average person doesn't have the technical know-how to keep it running, or the financial backing to build it, and that is why it is a *works* bike.



The estimated cost of this bike in manpower and technology is $5000.



The exhaust port is cooled by an ingenious aluminum finned flange.

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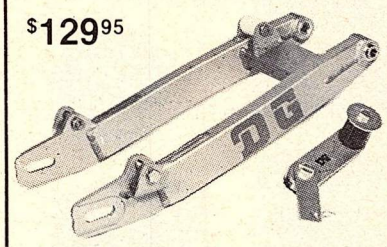

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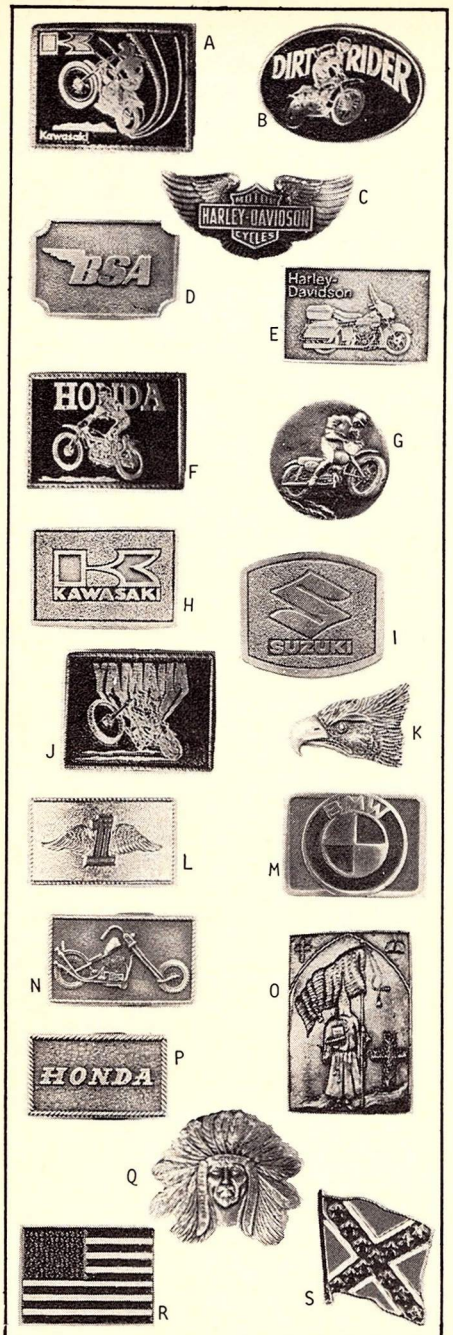

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YZ400E VS. RM400C

(*continued from page 55*)

bikes, the rims are equal, the forks are equal. Both bikes have rotten air cleaners that will shorten their lives considerably. Lately it seems that a good Japanese motocross bike, raced every week, will last a rider about eight months. After that the tolerances are so far out that servicing to bring it back to life is an expensive effort. If you don't race as much you can lengthen the figure, or if you don't take care of the bike very well you can shorten it. Putting good air filters (JT Racing Phase 2) and good oil into your bike will make it die gracefully somewhere farther down the road.

Surprisingly, we broke both bikes. The Yamaha has a new, stronger chrome moly frame which is much better than last year's. But we looped the YZ400 and did the rear of the frame in. The bike wasn't totaled, but the seat did take on a new stylish angle. We hit the frame with a two-by-four and got the two frame tubes back in line, but the bike never felt the same. Then one day we sent it over to Yamaha to have new fenders put on it and when it came back it was a different and new bike (just like the one we started with).

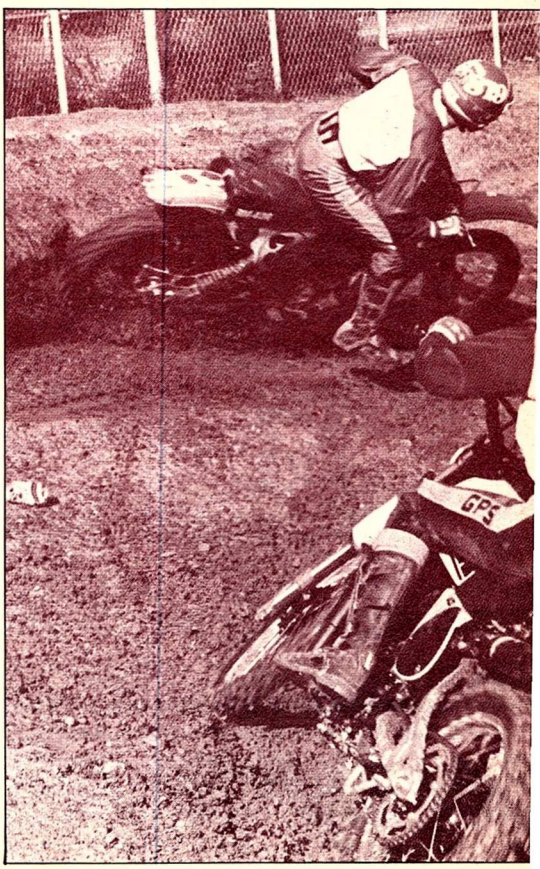
The Suzuki engine has always been one of the strongest and most reliable units around. Engine life on the Suzuki is longer than on the Yamaha, normally. We blew the top end on the RM400. It was a rainy and muddy race day at Saddleback Saturday and a ring snapped halfway through the first moto. The bike didn't stop running. It just lost all its power. But it was so muddy that everyone else was crashing. Dennis on the Yamaha 400 was running second and Jody was running third on the Suzuki. Too much power on slippery mud is worse than no power, so Dennis finally spun the YZ out and Jody got by, but he killed it in a mud puddle and the race was over. The Suzuki had zero compression, but kept on running anyway.

DETAILS

The Yamaha is a better looking and much more striking motorcycle. The Suzuki looks a lot like a PE250 enduro bike. Both bikes have mediocre handlebars. Yamaha used to have the weakest handlebars in the industry, but this year they increased the crossbar from 10mm to 12mm. Both bikes have large silencers that don't work as well as their size would indicate. The Yamaha has an excellent chain tensioner and several nylon rollers placed around the frame to guide the chain. The Suzuki chain tensioner is not nearly as zoot-capri. The Yamaha tank decals bubble up and get pretty grotesque looking. The Suzuki decals aren't as stylish, but they stay put. Yamaha has not yet improved the cheesy little middle-of-the-seat mounting system for holding the saddle in place. Suzuki maintains its old reliable method. Both bikes have new front number plates. The Suzuki plate has built-in cable guards, and mounts directly to the triple clamps. Bravo! Yamaha has a new two-sided plate that can be flipped over, but it still mounts to the fork legs with rubber bands. Suzuki stole the snazzy-looking cable guides from Yamaha to direct the front brake cable down the fork leg. Yamaha has the old-fashioned choke lever, while Suzuki still uses the newfangled pull pin. But Mikuni finally added a plastic handle to it. Suzuki has a better gas cap. It even has a little strap on it to keep it from falling in the dirt.

THE SHOCKER

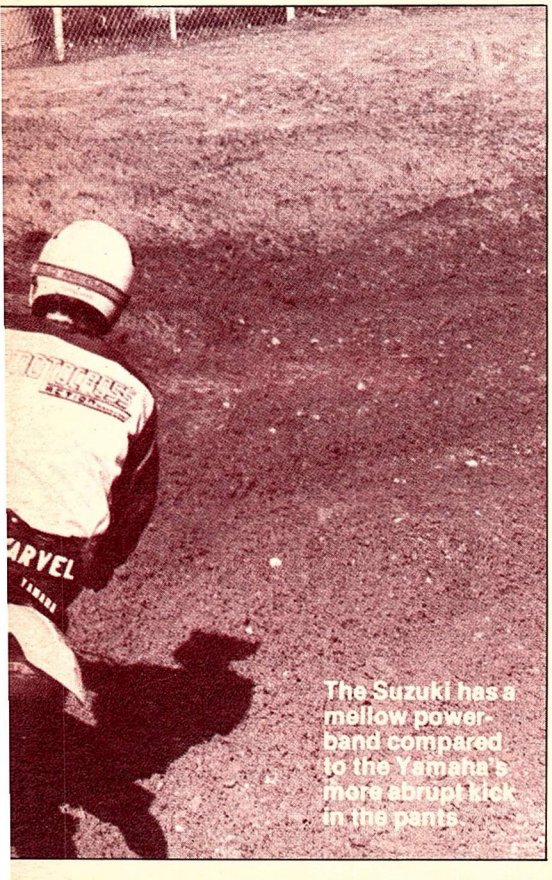
We knew that the Yamaha YZ400D



was a porker. When you fill it up with gas and head for the starting line it will go about 245 pounds. The aluminum swingarm has made the E-model only two pounds lighter than the D-model. The shocker of the whole test was that the Suzuki RM400 weighs more than the Yamaha!

The average open class rider is several years older than the 250 or 125 rider. When an open class rider buys a new bike he normally gets involved in the details and maintenance of the bike more than any other rider. The open class bike doesn't break as often and thus it allows the rider to spend more time riding and analyzing.

The Yamaha YZ400 and Suzuki RM400 are worth analyzing. And after careful consideration, finding the right machine will not become a matter of which bike is better, but which philosophy of riding is more suited to the individual. Get a test ride on both machines and, most importantly, talk to your friendly local dealer. When machines are this close to each other in competitiveness it means that the peripheral items become more important than ever. Neither of these two bikes is the best open class motorcycle made, but you could beat the best on either one.



The Suzuki has a mellow power-band compared to the Yamaha's more abrupt kick in the pants.

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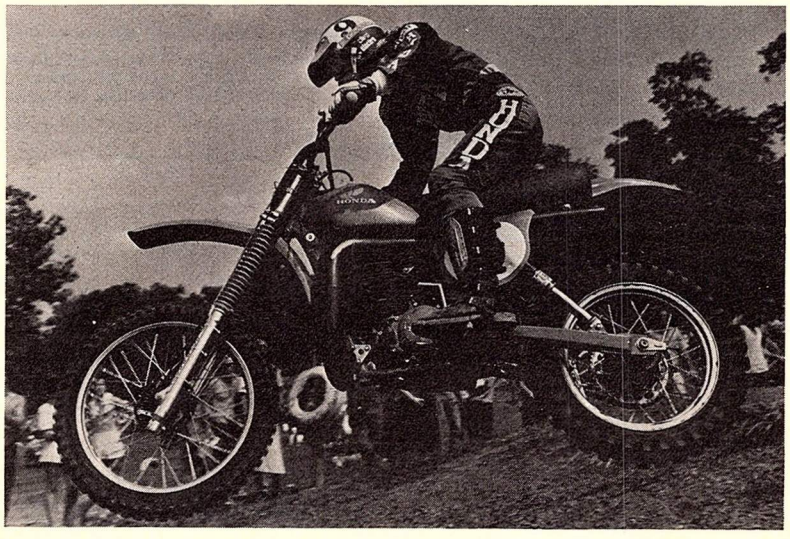

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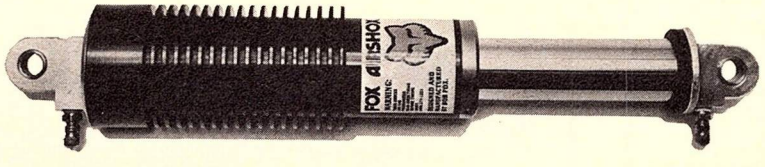

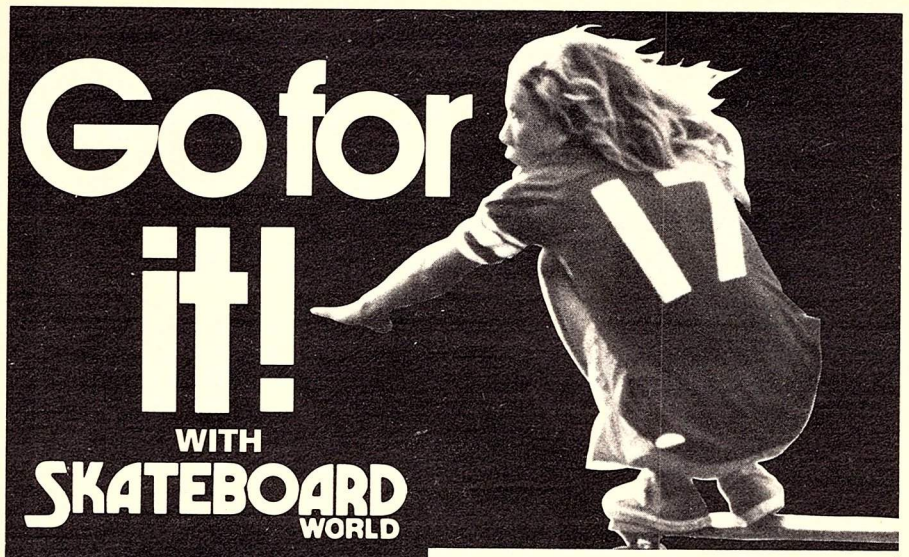

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JODY'S BOX

(*continued from page 6*)

get the track worked in. Then all the other riders complained and a street sweeper went out and pushed all the good berms I had made off of the track. It really ticked me off. I never complained about the things those guys did. And let me tell you, they did some stupid things. They would spend $5000 on a motorcycle and then show up at the track with a tire so worn down it didn't have any tread left. You ought to see how far they have missed the boat on the suspension revolution. They must have been locked in a closet. Rarely did anybody ever show up with any modern suspension. My bike was the only one with laid-down shocks or leading axle forks. They had these little tiny handlebars that looked like they had been broken off of a good set of MX bars. At first I wanted to be one of the guys and I used those clip-on things and tried to lie on the tank, but you couldn't get the sucker crossed up coming out of a corner on one wheel with those dinky little horns.

Granted, I didn't have all the answers, but these guys didn't know any answers. Entry fees were in the $25-a-race range. When you blew an engine it meant two top-end jobs, or even four top-end jobs, instead of one. It was true that you never got dirty, but you also rarely got into a good bar-banging, elbow-knocking dice, either. Most riders lived in fear of getting near each other. That neat-looking leather suit costs almost $300, is hotter than a shoeshoe rabbit in hell and offers about as much protection as wrapping yourself in Glad Wrap. And I don't know where Jarno got his wimmen, but road racer women can't hold a candle to the girls who race and watch motocross.

It wasn't long before I was back to my regular motocross schedule. The bikes cost a fourth as much, you can race ten times as often, everybody is easygoing and friendly, the track is challenging and rough, and there are no specters of doom or dread. Motocross is number one.

So the picture hangs in the bathroom. And next Sunday I will get up swearing and muttering to myself about the inconvenience of it all, cut myself shaving, trip over my Heckels looking for a clean jersey, spill lemonade mix down my shorts and head back to bed. But I'll never get back to sleep because I would only dream about three terror-filled laps on a TZ750 Yamaha. Better that I should face 40 trophy-crazed Juniors at Saddleback.

MAIL ENTRIES

(*continued from page 9*)

received a two-digit number. But I found out that they did not send in the money. So I got burned out having a two-digiter in two classes (100-125 Junior). What should I do?

Caveman Ogg
Livonia, Michigan

(If it was an AMA event, try writing the AMA, P.O. Box 141, Westerville, Ohio 43081. Tell them what happened and explain your situation. Make enough noise and someone's bound to hear you.)

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HIGH

Dear MXA,

I just wanted to send this picture to let you know we race motocross in Montana too. I even have a good idea. You send your best up here this spring, and we'll match you against our best. You could use some fresh Montana mountain air and sunshine anyway, I bet. By the way, we KNOW what WFO means!

Steve Miller
Kalispell, Montana

(Sounds good, Steve, except you'd have us at an advantage breathing mountain air to our basin smog.)

LOAD OFF HIS MIND

Dear MXA,

I am very desperate. Should I lift weights in my workout plan for motocross?

Tim Bray
Toledo, Ohio

(Lifting weights can be beneficial in developing your arms and shoulders, but not necessarily for motocross. A good program would combine wrist exercises, running, jumping rope, some weight-lifting and plenty of riding.)

MAYBE HE MEANT PRESTON

Dear MXA:

My stupid cousin put Richard Petty down for Rider of the Year. I told him he races stock cars, not motorcycles; besides, whoever heard of Dodge motocross bikes.

Trent Goff
Galveston, Indiana

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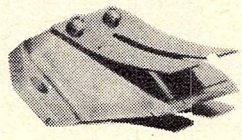

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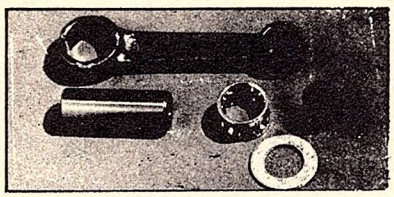

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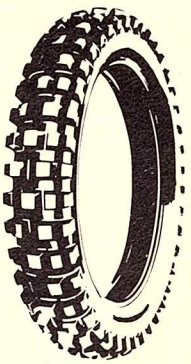

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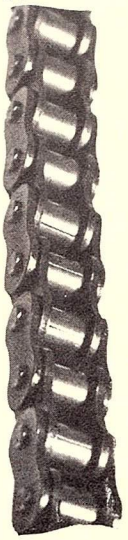

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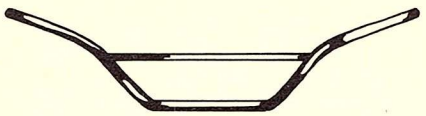

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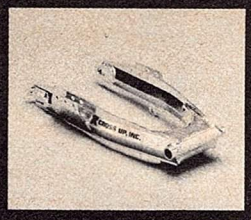

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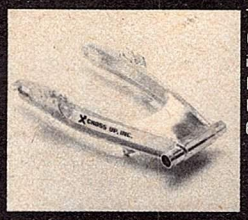
Double Diamond
aluminum extrusion
6 month guarantee



TT 500/S145.
Considerable increase
in wheel travel
Double Diamond
Extruded aluminum
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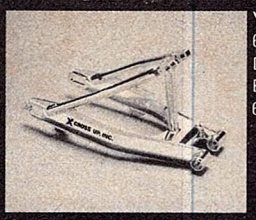

YZ 125D/S165.
6 pounds 11 ounces
Double Diamond
Extruded aluminum
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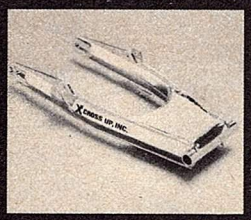

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5 pounds 11 ounces
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Extruded aluminum
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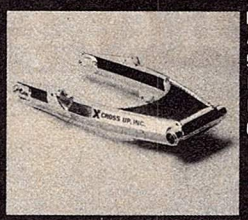

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5 pounds 11 ounces
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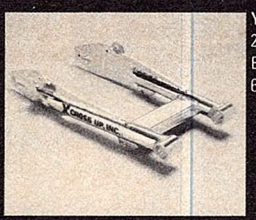
Extruded aluminum
6 month guarantee



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2 pounds 12 ounces
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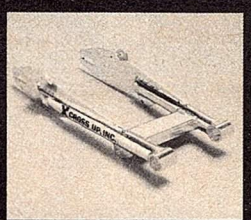
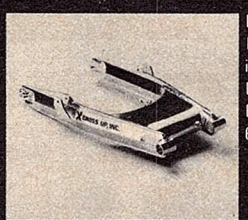


XR 75/S110.
2 pounds 12 ounces
Extruded aluminum
6 month guarantee



KX 250 - 400/S145.
Reduces unsprung weight
increases rearwheel travel
Double Diamond
Extruded aluminum
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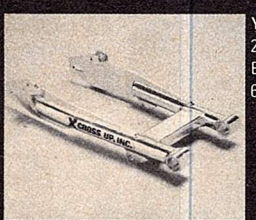
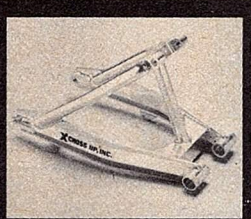
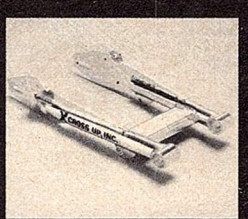


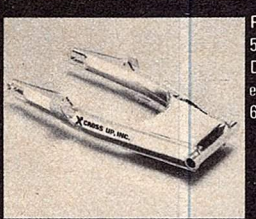
YZ 80D/S110.
2 pounds 12 ounces
Extruded aluminum
6 month guarantee



YZ 250 - 400 D/S165.
6 pounds 12 ounces
Increased travel
Double Diamond
Extruded aluminum
6 month guarantee



RM 80/S110.
2 pounds 12 ounces
Extruded aluminum
6 month guarantee



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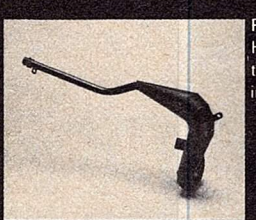

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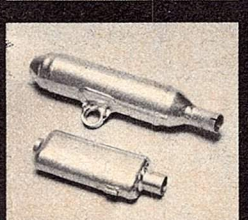

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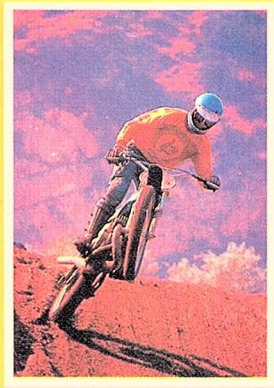

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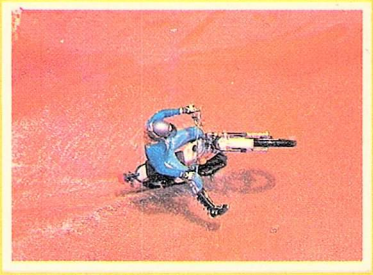

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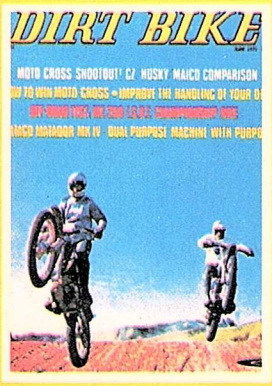

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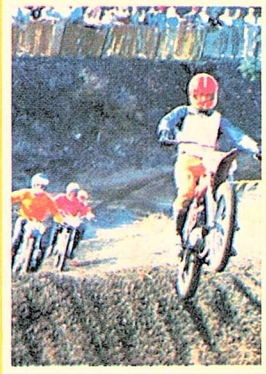

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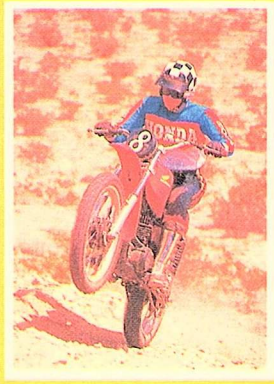

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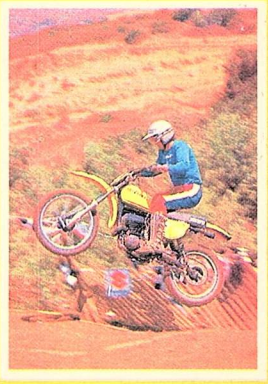

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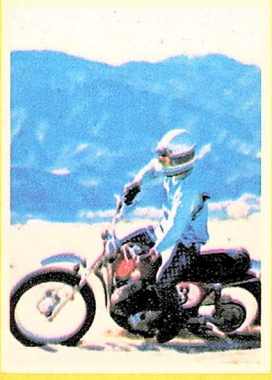

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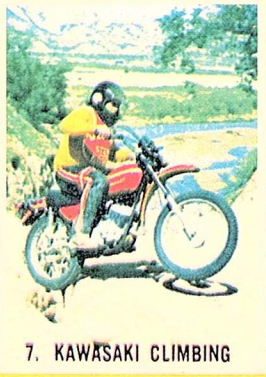

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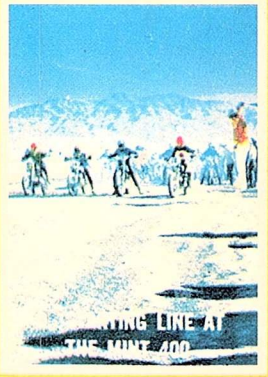

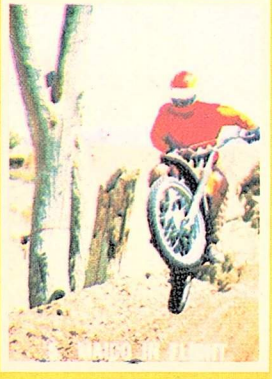

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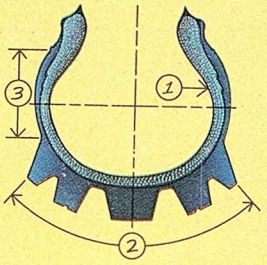

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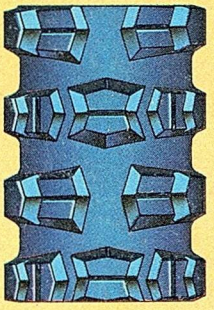

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